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PEASANT STATE AND SOCIETY IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA

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BURTON STEIN

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Preface

This book is somewhat perverse in theoretical and historiographical senses. Being about peasants without lords who established and maintained great states, enduring and complex local institutions, and elaborate religious institutions, it is a study which denies, or at least questions, certain of the strongly held conceptions of what peasant society is in contemporary social science. Being a book about early South Indian society viewed at the interface of what is usually considered the 'little' and the 'great' tradition, a study which looks upward and downward from this interface, as it were, and further, a study which is concerned with social and cultural change, it is also a work which denies, or seriously questions, much of the extant historiography on early South India.

The purpose of this study was never conceived as historiographical, that is, an essay upon the established interpretations of some part of the medieval past of South India. Yet, it has become such a study. Issues in South Indian history which have acquired a comfortable and comforting acceptablity amongst many students are found not to stand well before the queries this study poses. The nature of the political system and the state have been found to be wrongly conceived by scholars of the past; institutions such as the peasant village, its locality context and rural groups have been found to be poorly characterized, not so much on a factual basis, but in the constructions put upon the extant evidence. This has required the re-examination of much that has been written and what, for some readers, will seem a heavy burden of tedious recapitulation of old arguments and evidence. The cause of cumulative scholarship makes any other mode of exposition less than responsible, but an inevitable consequence for some readers will be the presence of too much detail and for others the appearance of disrespect, even arrogance, about what previous scholars in this field have accomplished.

This would be an understandable but unfortunate conclusion. This study began as an effort to discover in the published scholarship on medieval South India a basis for dealing with, or con-

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Note on Transliteration and Pronunciation

Certain Indian-language terms have not been transliterated. These include proper nouns such as the names of castes (e.g. Reddi), kings (e.g. Rajaraja), places (e.g. Tanjavur), and authors and titles of Indian-language texts (e.g. *Civakacintamani* by Tiruttakkadeva). Also included among the untransliterated words are those well-established enough in English usage to appear in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* 6th.ed. (e.g. vihara, sastra, puja). Finally, a selection of frequently used, technical terms have been separately glossed (*q.v.* 'Glossary'); after having been transliterated in their first use in the text they are simply italicized thereafter.

The transliteration of Sanskrit words has followed Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (see 'Abbreviations') and Dravidian words generally have followed the *D.E.D.* augmented by the *M.U.T.L.* (see 'Abbreviations') for Tamil words. There are two exceptions to this. The first involves Sanskrit borrowings into the Tamil where the orthographic system of the latter is peculiarly unadaptive and results in awkward, at times unintelligible, constructions (e.g. *brahmōtsava*, the principal annual festival of a temple, is rendered by the *M.U.T.L.* as *piramōṟcavam*); in such cases, Sanskrit transliteration is followed to which is added an *m* as occurs in earlier usage (hence: *brahmōtsavam*; and *grāmam*, village, for *kirāmam; prasādam*, consecrated offering, for *piracātam; prabandham*, poetic composition, for *pirapantam*).

The other deviation from the *D.E.D.* and *M.U.T.L.* schemes for Tamil follows the practice of rendering the voiceless stops *p, t, k*, in initial positions of a word as voiced stops *b, d, g*, when they occur between vowels, and rendering the hard palatal *ṭ* as *ḍ*. Thus: *parambu*, revenue account, not *parampu; tiruccendūr*, a temple town, not *tiruccentūr*; and *koṅgu*, a large territory in Tamil country, not *koṅku*. However, in Tamil and other Dravidian languages, long or double consonants occur (e.g., *nāṭṭār*, those of the country or locality); these and *kk*, *nn* are pronounced as in the English

ho*t* *t*ea, blac*k* *cow*, te*n* *n*ights. The letters *r* and *ṟ* are trilled, and the long consonant *ṟṟ* is pronounced with a hard trill (thus: *kū**ṟṟ**am*, a local territorial unit, is pronounced like kootrum; similarly, *n ṟ* is pronounced ndr as in the English lau*ndry*.

Glossary

The following selection of terms are formally transliterated on their first occurrence in the text and thereafter appear in italic script only. After each transliterated term, the language and a brief definition are given. Where appropriate, the location in the text, where a full discussion of the term occurs, is also given. Standard glossaries for the material in this book are: *MUTL; S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, following p. 1610; D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Motilal Banarsidass, 1966; T.V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, 2nd ed., University of Madras, Madras, 1967, p. 421 ff (see 'Abbreviations').

amman. Tamil. Goddess; divine lady; q.v., ch. VI.

bhakti. Sanskrit. Doctrinal principle of salvation through devotion; q.v., ch. I.

brahmadēya. Sanskrit. Gift to Brahmans; specifically, a grant of village income and management to Brahmans; q.v., ch. IV.

devadāna. Sanskrit. Gift to gods; specifically, the endowment of income from land or a village to a temple; q.v., ch. I.

gaṅgavāḍi. Tamil. Territorial unit, like *maṇḍalam* (q.v.) in Karnataka.

ghaṭikā. Sanskrit. Centre for advanced studies; same as Tamil *sālai* (from Sanskrit: *śālā*).

kaḷḷar. Tamil. A people of southern Tamil country.

kammāḷar. Tamil. Artisan-traders, usually including five groups, hence also *pāñcāḷar*.

kūrram. Tamil. Local territory, especially in *toṇḍaimaṇḍalam* (q.v., *maṇḍalam*).

maṇḍalam. Sanskrit. Large territorial units of which the principal ones are : *toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, cōḻamaṇḍalam, koṅgumaṇḍalam, paṇḍimaṇḍalam*.

maṟavar. Tamil. A people of southern Tamil country.

maṭha. Sanskrit. Seminary; educational centre.

nāḍu. Tamil. Local territory; *nāṭṭār*, those of the territory; q.v., ch. III.

nāyaka. Sanskrit. Title of chief; *nāyaṅkara*, status of chief; q.v., ch. VIII.

nu[*o*]*lambavāḍi*. Tamil. Large territory, like *maṇḍalam* (q.v.).

periyanāḍu. Tamil. Big-*nāḍu* (q.v.); a territory comprising several *nāḍus*; q.v., ch. VI.

praśasti. Sanskrit. Eulogy; eulogistical preamble to inscriptions; *meykkīrtti* in Tamil.

sabhā. Sanskrit. Assembly; specifically, the assembly of a *brahmadēya* (q.v.) village; also *mahāsabhā*, q.v., ch. IV.

śaṅgam. Sanskrit: *saṃgha*. Community of Buddhist or Jaina sectarians; specifically, such a community or academy of Jaina literary scholars in fifth century Madurai.

ūr. Tamil. Village and assembly of a village; *ūrār*, those of the village.

valaṅgai-iḍaṅgai. Tamil. Right and left hand; specifically, castes of the right and left division; Kannada: *balagai-eḍagai*.

Abbreviations

A.R.E.	India, Department of Archaeology, *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*. Published under slightly different titles and in different places from 1887.
D.E.D.	*A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, T. Burrow and M.B. Emeneau, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1961.
E.C.	*Epigraphia Carnatica,* 16 v., Government Press, Mysore/Bangalore/Madras, 1889-1955.
E.I.	*Epigraphia Indica*, Archaeological Survey of India, Calcutta/Delhi, 1892.
H.C.G.E.S.I.	*Historical and Cultural Geography and Ethnology of South India with Special Reference to Cola Epigraphs*, B. Suresh Pillai, Deccan College Ph.D. Thesis, Poona, 1965.
H.S.I.	*A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1955.
I.A.	*The Indian Antiquary*, Madras, Bombay, 1872-.
I.E.S.H.R.	*The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Delhi, 1963-.
I.H.Q.	*The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, 1925-.
I.M.P.	*A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency, Collected till 1915 with Notes and References.*, V. Rangacharya, ed., 3 vols., Government Press, Madras, 1919.
J.A.H.R.S.	*Quarterly Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Rajahmundry, 1926-.
J.A.O.S.	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, New Haven, 1843-.
J.I.H.	*Journal of Indian History*, Trivandrum, 1921-.
J.R.A.S.	*The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1834-.
M.U.T.L.	*Tamil Lexicon; Published under the Authority*

	of the University of Madras, 6 v., University of Madras, Madras, 1936.
Q.J.M.S.	*The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, 1910-.
S.I.I.	*South Indian Inscriptions*, Archaeological Survey of India, Madras/Delhi, 1890-.
S.I.T.I.	*South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, 3 v., T.N. Subramaniam, ed., Government Oriental Series, Madras, 1953-7.
T.A.S.	*Travencore Archaeological Series*, 9 v., Trivandrum, 1910-41.
T.A.S.S.I.	*Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, Madras, 1955-.
T.T.D.I.	*Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series; Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection* and 6 v. of texts, S. Subrahmanya Sastry, ed., Madras, 1930-8.
Wilson Glossary	H.H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, Munshiram Manoharlal [reprint], Delhi, 1968.

Introduction

This study was begun many years ago in an effort to establish the foundation for an analysis of modern agricultural development in the Madras Presidency of the British period and its successor administrative units in independent India. The task proved to be an extended one, and the results presented here are far less complete than was naïvely planned at the outset. As originally intended, the benchmark analysis of the South Indian agrarian system was to come up to the nineteenth century. This has not proved possible. Essentially what is presented is an analysis of the South Indian agrarian system to the end of the Chola period, the late thirteenth century; to this has been added a discursive final chapter suggesting trends to the seventeenth century.

Partly, the inordinate time required for the preparation of this study resulted from the need to master a vast and complex corpus of evidence. It was supposed at the outset that this evidence had already been more or less satisfactorily synthesized by three generations of scholarship on the medieval period of South Indian history. This supposition proved an incorrect one. Denigration of this published work is not intended by the last observation and by references below to viewpoints in the extant published work against which reservations and, even more blunt, disagreements are lodged. By comparison with other parts of the Indian sub-continent, the literature on medieval South India possesses distinguished scholarly qualities. And, it may be added that while one reason for this relative excellence has been the richness of the inscriptional records of the South Indian medieval age, the obverse side of this richness has been an enormous task of analysis and synthesis. Repeatedly in the discussion below, grateful cognizance is taken of the accomplishments of the author's predecessors. Still, the purposes of cumulative scholarship — the serious examination and re-examination of the findings of one's predecessors — has resulted in an overall critique of the established historiography on medieval South India. It is also to be recognized that the present writer's interests and his somewhat different theoretical

assumptions have led to the raising of questions and the elucidation of findings which are antagonistic to some of the established historiography. If in nothing else, the concentration upon peasant society and culture would have assured this dissonant relationship with respect to much that has been written on medieval South India.

The peasant societies of medieval South India are more ancient, durable and, yes, elegant than most in the world. Yet, the rich historical literature on South India affords few descriptions of these peasant societies and almost none relating peasantry to other social elements in the development of Indian society and culture. References to agricultural techniques, landholding, crops, market organization, and relations among peasant agriculturists and others, including formal political authority, may be found scattered throughout the historical literature, but only rarely is systematic attention given to any of these matters save that of land revenue.[1] In too many monographs and, of course, in the more general histories of medieval South India, it is assumed that the relationship existing between the web of social and cultural phenomena comprising medieval South Indian peasant society and other sectors of the social order was obvious and unchanging. It is as if events and the historical process of which they are part moved past or around agrarian arrangements, just as in the charming Indian tradition of the peasant who worked his field while a battle raged nearby because he knew that warriors were obliged, by their *dharma*, to respect the cultivated field! Similarly, authors have seen fit to treat with all agrarian matters in a chapter usually entitled 'land revenue' in which it is often stated that the ruler or dynasty under study obviously recognized the importance of agriculture and took considerable care to follow injunctions about the proportion of revenue to be collected and the compassionate remission of revenue during difficult times. At the same time, however, the 'state' or the 'king' is supposed to have collected revenue from microscopically small plots!

The naïveté of this conception of the relationship between land and society has been responsible for much poor history. To reduce agrarian relations to a matter of land revenue and then simply to

[1] Morris D. Morris and Burton Stein, 'The Economic History of India', *Journal of Economic History*, v. 21, June, 1961, pp. 179-201, provides a general critique of this characteristic of Indian historiography.

inventory a *mélange* of taxes, as is often done, is to dismiss a whole range of vital questions pertaining to the material basis of medieval South Indian life. To be sure, these questions are not necessarily the most important with which an historian can occupy himself. However, the failure in the existing historiography on early South India to seriously address the matter of agrarian organization has had two obvious consequences. First, it is not possible from the existing writing to formulate a progressive or cumulative understanding of the South Indian agrarian order with reference to which more recent developments could be understood. Second, and obviously, without serious consideration to the agrarian arrangements of the medieval age, many other aspects of medieval society — most notably political arrangements — have been poorly analysed.

The present study attempts to remedy these deficiencies. It also attempts to provide the foundation for a broad, new interpretation of medieval South Indian history based upon a central concern with peasant society and culture. The spatial context of the study is first considered and criteria set forth according to which the 'South Indian region' is defined. Chapter II is a speculative essay on the origins of the peasant agrarian system prior to the Chola period. The next three chapters take up salient institutions of peasant society from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries: the basic ethnic-ecological unit, the *nāḍu;* the cultural and agrarian significance of Brahman settlements, *brahmadēya*; and the bifurcation of middle and low ranked social groups into the dual division of 'right-hand' and 'left-hand' peoples, *valaṅgai* and *iḍaṅgai.* Chapter VI outlines a set of significant changes which can be identified in the late Chola period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These changes and the processes which generated them provide the basis for the society and culture of the Vijayanagara period, the fourteenth to the sixteenth century; this latter period is discussed in the final chapter, Chapter XIII. The nature of the Chola state occupies a lengthy Chapter VII. The conception of the Chola state and its successors as 'segmentary' is offered as an alternative model of political organization to that which presently exists because it more satisfactorily orders the existing evidence on governance and because it incorporates a theory of political organization which is consonant with the kind of peasant society presented in the evidence on medieval South India.

The central problem of this study is that of explicating the agrarian basis of South India during the Chola age and later. It has already been stated that a broader concern had originally informed this study. The outline of this original conception has been published elsewhere.[2] In justification of the present, more limited, study, it may be said that the Chola period is the necessary starting place for any longitudinal interest in the agrarian system of the Tamil plain and its extensions into the interior upland of modern Salem, Coimbatore, portions of the Arcots, and major portions of the Karnataka plateau and the Andhra plain. From the ninth to the twelfth centuries, the foundation of a system of agrarian organization was established which appears to have endured through most of the subsequent career of the agrarian order to the nineteenth century.

The duration and spatial scope of the Chola state ranks it as one of the great states of India's pre-modern age. Moreover, thousands of stone and metal inscriptions of the Cholas have been noticed in the annual reports of the Epigraphical Department of the Governments of Madras and India, and those of several princely states. The texts of about 3,500 Tamil inscriptions of the Chola period have been published. Possibly half of these inscriptions deal with land arrangements of some sort. In the sheer number of historical inscriptions dealing with agrarian arrangements, the several dynasties of medieval South India would — and do — assume major importance. But one goes beyond this to observe, finally, that during the Chola age we are afforded the first view — though it is not always a clear view — of how wealthy and powerful peasants, Brahmans, great chiefs and kings, and to some extent those dependent upon these leaders of the society of the time, shaped a highly variegated landscape to their distinctive purposes. And the arrangements established regarding land during the Chola period persisted into the modern age notwithstanding political, social, and cultural developments which transformed many crucial aspects of South Indian life.

The interaction of Brahmans and localized peasant folk constituted the primary cultural nexus of medieval South Indian peasant society. Mythologically and ideologically, Brahmans traced their

[2] 'Integration of the Agrarian System of South India' *in* Robert E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp. 175-217.

origins to the pure Gangetic land of Aryavarta. *Gotra* names preserve this element of spatially pure substantiality. The research of modern scholars, most of whom have either been Brahmans or Europeans partly disposed to Brahmanical views, has tended to accept the mythology and ideology of Brahmans as strangers — outsiders — to South India. At least that has been true until quite recently when it became impolitic in South India to make such claims. However, except in the sense that most peninsular peoples are descendants of an archaic migratory folk who made their way into the peninsula, there is no validity to the claim of a primordial ethnic separateness of Brahmans from most others of the southern peninsula. In fact, non-Brahman castes of the twentieth century often claim an equally remote origin. Thus, during the medieval period and subsequently, Brahmans are best seen as peninsular folk who, in the manner of Brahmans everywhere in India, maintained and transmitted some portion of the totality of esoteric and dharmic knowledge which aggregatively is the Brahman tradition in India.

Certain portions of that total tradition have always been regarded as uniquely southern, such as the White Yajur Veda school and what is perhaps the most significant of the intellectual and ritual elaborations of the Brahmanical tradition — e.g., Vedanta and the Panchatantra *agamic* temple tradition. Medieval dharma texts also recognize that the Brahmans of southern India differ from northern Brahmans in some of their customs. This, in a somewhat facile way, is seen as a consequence of cultural interaction; e.g., Brahmanical cultural traditions are seen to have transformed Dravidian 'folk' culture. But, 'folk' is hardly an appropriate modifier to apply to the often great elegance and depth of the Dravidian culture revealed in Classical Tamil poetry. According to this earliest evidence, both traditions modified each other. When the relationship between peasant carriers of the 'folk' cultural traditions of South India and the Brahman carriers of something called the 'great tradition' of India is considered, it is an inescapable conclusion that the distinction is wholly cultural: it is ideas, not distinctive origins; it is principles, not ethnicity, which defines the nature of the interaction of the 'great' and 'folk' traditions of South India.

Nor can the relationship between what tends to be regarded as Dravidian 'folk' traditions and the Brahmanical 'great' tradition

be dichotomized in the structural categories 'urban–rural'. That has been touched upon above. Brahmans are no more people of cities than non-Brahmans are carriers of the folk tradition. In any case, cities — distinctively urban socio-cultural contexts — are relatively unimportant in ancient India at least from the deep antiquity of Harappan times. D. D. Kosambi spoke of 'rustic' Brahmans of the post-Gupta age in northern India in the sense of being a metamorphosis of an earlier urban condition.[3] Even granting this conception of a fundamental disjunction in India's ancient historical period — the decline of its cities — by medieval times it is no longer possible to make the kind of distinction which occurs in many other peasant societies, and is considered to be generic. The city for Kroeber and Redfield and others who have discussed the cultural aspect of peasant societies has been seen as a necessary pre-condition of peasant society; that other 'part' to which peasant society and culture are linked. The low order of importance of urban areas in medieval South India has implications beyond the cultural aspects of peasant society, of course. The political system and the economic order took a different shape in this non-urban society. But it is especially significant with respect to the cultural interaction of peasants and others that the principal custodians of the Sanskritic learned tradition in South India lived in rural settlements with peasants. Not only were Brahmans ethnically indistinguishable from their peasant contemporaries, they were their neighbours.

An inevitable outcome of millenia of social and cultural propinquity and interaction of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic cultures in South Indian rural settlements was a single cultural system. Until the thirteenth century perhaps, there were still attempts to segregate certain cultural elements as Sanskritic and others as appropriate to the Dravidian language traditions of peninsular India. However, there could be no effective segregation of either the language or of specific traditions conveyed in these languages. From late Classical times, the interaction of 'folk' and 'high' traditions (sometimes stated as *deśi* and *mārga* respectively) was evident–as a reciprocal process involving mutual transfers.[4] At-

[3] D.D. Kosambi, 'The Basis of Ancient Indian History', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 75, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1955, p. 236.

[4] *See* V. Raghavan, 'Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture', *Far Eastern Quarterly (Journal of Asian Studies)*, 15, no. 2, August 1956, p. 504.

tempts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to maintain a semblance of cultural compartmentalization within what had become a single cultural system resulted in the crises of the Saiva Siddhanta movement and the sectarian divisions among Vishnu worshippers. While nominally theological, the issues in these sectarian crises included the appropriateness — indeed the completeness — of Tamil as a liturgical vehicle and the participation of non-Brahman votaries as important ritual functionaries and teachers. After the thirteenth century, the notion that Sanskrit and its Brahman adepts were to be the sole custodians of a high tradition while Tamil, or some other Dravidian language, and non-Brahmans were to be the custodians of folk traditions could no longer be explicitly sustained.

The shared cultural systems of medieval South India may not have included all who lived in the southern peninsula, but it did encompass all who lived in the peasant settlements of the major agrarian tracts of the southern peninsula and therefore included Brahmans, non-Brahman cultivating groups, artisans and traders. Even landless, agrestic labourers in peasant localities shared in the general cultural system, if only negatively in suffering the opprobrium of inferior, 'polluted' status, a condition which was acceptable then as it has been until recently in exchange for the survival benefits of being part of a relatively prosperous agrarian economy.

A final element in the relationship between Brahmans, as the transmitters of high cultural traditions, and the non-Brahman peasantry, upon whose support Brahmans depended and with whom Brahmans lived as neighbours, is political and ideological. In the spatially circumscribed world of the South Indian peasantry, as in the locality systems of peasants everywhere, great kingly authority and the 'state' may be thought to be remote. This remoteness would not be seen as a flaw, an imperfection, but a predictable feature in a pre-modern political system lacking the technology to close great distances.

Such an implication or conclusion is explicitly denied here. As the title of this study announces, there is something called 'the peasant state' however dissonant such a conception may appear to modern scholars of peasant societies. Two features — indeed, defining attributes — of peasant societies for most scholars presuppose a conceptual and empirical separation of peasants from

those who rule them. One of these features is scale. Peasant societies consist of small, local, often isolated communities; they are physically as well as culturally distant from the 'major', 'high', or 'important' institutions, hence, they are as Kroeber proposed, part-societies and part-cultures. The other feature is explicitly political, that is peasants occupy an 'underdog' position with respect to the more powerful and dominant. Thus, Fallers speaks of a peasant society as 'one whose primary constituent units are semi-autonomous local communities with semi-autonomous cultures'.[5] The qualified autonomy of peasant produces salient boundary characteristics such as to define 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> On the one hand there is the local community . . . [hostile to outsiders, sharing rights in land, submitting to and supporting institutions of local government and social control] and on the other hand there is a hierarchy of patrimonial or feudal relations of personal superiority and responsibility. . . and subordinate dependence which link the local community and the wider polity.[6]

In the light of these perceived features of peasant societies, the idea of a peasant state is at least paradoxical, if it is not contradictory. However, this is what the state in medieval South India appears to have been.

The medieval South Indian state is here considered a 'segmentary state' in which political authority and control were local in several crucial ways. The scope of the constituent units of the state was limited to well-defined and persistent ethnic territories; its chiefs were, in most cases, leaders or spokesmen of the dominant ethnic groups of the local territory; and, perhaps most unique in South India, corporate bodies representing the interests of various folk of a locality participated in the public business of the locality.

Peasant localities in medieval South India were not uniform, varying in their composition, wealth, and elaborateness in accordance with constraints or opportunities presented by nature to the agrarian potentialities of the age. When and where there was reliable moisture for irrigated agriculture, the largest concentrations of population were found, the greatest wealth, the most social and cultural elaborateness. There, too, were the settlements

[5] 'Are African Cultivators to be Called "Peasants"?', *Current Anthropology*, v. 2, no. 1, April, 1961, p. 108.

[6] Ibid., p. 109.

of Brahmans. Localities less favoured by nature, had less. However, arching over the resource variation among localities given by nature and hardened into valued practices and loyalties, was a Brahman paradigm, a framework for the attainment of appropriate society. The most authoritative interpreters of this ideological framework as well as the 'gatekeepers' to access to status and authority were Brahmans. Power, order, legitimacy within the locality world of the South Indian peasantry were mediated by Brahmans. This was more true in those localities of wealth and prosperous agriculture and trade than in those peripheral tracts where people survived on hazardous, rain-dependent agriculture. But, to some extent, it was true everywhere there was sedentary agriculture.

The culture of caste as an element in the character of Indian peasant societies does not end with the relationship of Brahmans and non-Brahman peasants. Caste principles pertain to kinship, marriage, and occupation as well as to matters directly involving Brahmans. In South India, the relative isolation, or autonomy, of peasant localities was reinforced by kinship and marriage practices. The spatially restricting preference for cross-cousin or maternal uncle-niece marriage has been a well-recognized difference between North and South Indian marriage systems. In the former case, with its different consanguinity rules, affinal networks spread over a wider area. The factor of difference between the marriage networks of North and South India, in terms of this spatial question, has been estimated as great as ten in recent times.[7] In this, caste, marriage and kinship codes can be seen as supporting one of the generic characteristics of South Indian peasant society — its localness and autonomy.

However, caste principles may be considered as antagonistic to other presumed attributes of peasant society. One is the egalitarianism of the peasant community. For some scholars who have worked on peasant societies, the asymmetry which characterizes the relationship of the peasant community and the powerful outsiders to whom went a portion of peasant production contrasted with the presumed egalitarian and cooperative ethic of the peasant

[7] M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah state that the marriage field in South India for rural castes is about twenty or thirty villages whereas that of North India is 200 to 300 villages. 'The Myth of the Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village' in *The Economic Weekly*, 10 September 1960, p. 1376.

community. The contrast is easily overdrawn, resulting in a failure, often, to recognize stratified relationships within many peasant societies as well as giving expression to an idealization of social harmony and human decency which is presumably endangered, even destroyed, by the encroachment upon peasant societies of archaic bureaucratic forms or the social, economic, and psychological disruption of modern industrialized society.

Clearly, peasant societies vary in the degree to which internal stratified relationships exist, but in most, and perhaps all, there appears to be some of this. Caste principles of hierarchy and inequality while contributing an important specific quality to Indian peasant society cannot be thought to raise serious doubts about whether this was a peasant society. To be sure, there is more to the distinctiveness of the Indian variant of peasant societies than the explicitness of its rules of hierarchic social relations. The vulnerability of low caste landless labourers and many artisans to crushing status deprivation and to economic exploitation are real enough whether one accepts wholly or partly the recent literature on the 'Hindu *jajmani* system' and some studies of contemporary Indian village life[8] or whether one deals with the often fragmentary evidence of the past. However, even in India where caste codes often enjoin rigorous forms of segregation and ranking within a peasant locality, the exigent requirements of peasant life generate in India, as elsewhere, forms of economic, social, ritual, and political cooperation and interdependence among the diverse parts of a peasant community. Until there is more systematic comparative research on peasant societies and better means for assessing relative degrees of inequality within peasant societies, it may be taken that Indian peasant societies are not essentially aberrant in the inequality of their internal constitutions; these peasant societies fit within what must be, and perhaps one day will be, a dimensional schema along with other features of peasant societies in the world.

[8] General discussions: T.O. Beidelman, *A Comparative Analysis of the Jajmani System*, Association of Asian Studies, Monograph, no. 8, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1959; Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1970, ch. IV, pp. 92-109. Village studies: McKim Marriott, *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955; M.N. Srinivas, *India's Villages*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1960; André Béteille, *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*, OUP, Delhi, 1974.

Another presumed generic feature of peasant societies which may be considered to test the degree to which caste principles can be reconciled with most definitions of this sociological type is the 'multi-dimensionality' of the peasant household. What Shanin and others appear to mean by this is that the peasant household is not simply, nor solely, involved in agricultural production though this is, to be sure, its most important livelihood function in the local as well as the general economy. The peasant household in most places also produces many of its own tools and household implements; it produces handicraft goods for its own consumption and for exchange, and in other productive ways creates around the family farm a high degree of material self-sufficiency. Correlated with this 'multi-dimensional' aspect of the generic peasant household is the presumption of a long apprenticeship which younger members of the peasant family must undergo under the tutelage of their elders. Among other consequences of this lengthy training period, generational divisions — the emphasis upon seniority — are strengthened. What, then, is to be made of the division of labour maintained in Indian caste codes?

Classically stated, caste culture segregates and ranks (at times in an inexplicably arbitrary manner) occupational specialists in the finally graded manner characteristic of Indian schema of other kinds. Moreover, during the medieval period of South Indian history, an agrarian settlement was considered a 'proper' village only when there was a full complement of occupational specialists, 'the eighteen castes'. These included not only those service castes performing pollution related tasks, such as the washerman, the barber and, of course, the sweeper, but also scribal functionaries who actually enjoyed relatively high ritual rank; there was also a set of persons whose skills and productive functions were obviously important to a peasant settlement, e.g. potters, smiths, carpenters, and weavers.

The contrast of the Indian caste division of functions and the presumed 'multi-dimensional', or non-specialized, character of peasant households generally is easily overstated. Most peasant communities everywhere in the world displayed some or considerable specialization among peasant households, and the presumed 'multi-dimensionality' of the peasant household in most places differed only in degree from the complex, code-enjoined occupational system in India. The English peasantry of

the thirteenth century is estimated to have been virtually landless to the extent of one-quarter to one-third of its number, and a large number were non-agricultural specialists.[9] It is in this sense of specialization within a general framework of a peasant society that Firth and others have called fishermen and merchants, 'peasants'. There is reason to assert, too, that the occupational completeness of caste rules was not realized in many cases. Pollution norms required that high caste persons have access to washermen, barbers, and others whose services were necessary for the maintenance of the pure state required for those of high ritual status. But, beyond those few services, the prescribed array of occupational specializations was probably seldom realized. Nor was this necessarily a breach of code injunctions. Even Brahmans were permitted to cultivate, if necessary, and where other specialists were not available — as must have occurred — a condition of necessity would have been considered to exist for Brahmans as well as for ritually less fastidious non-Brahmans. A corresponding relaxation of occupational restrictions can have been anticipated. As in many aspects of caste culture, the fully elaborated codes are to be understood as the logical and optimum condition, not the existential condition under which Brahmans, especially, but others too, were supposed to live.

For the historian, and particularly the Asian or Indian historian, the concept of 'peasant society' is of the greatest significance. Beneath the level of vast empires and great cities in Asia and India, with their patent vicissitudes and often exaggerated competence to control enormous territories, rural cultivators and those associated with them have historically accounted for the overwhelming mass of the population. They have provided the basic wealth and manpower which sustained civilized institutions. This remains, perhaps dismayingly, true in the present. For many of the problems with which historians concern themselves, it is no longer possible to ignore these major parts of polities and societies nor, what amounts to the same thing, to assume that the rural, peasant world was inert, passive, and unchanging. Contemporary social science

[9] E.A. Kosminsky, *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1956, p.209. Kosminsky observes the 'very abundant and variety of names indicating non-agricultural work reminds us forcibly that our sources [their exclusive concern with cultivation] . . . give a far from full and very one-sided picture of the English village.' (p. 229.)

research as well as increasingly sophisticated historical studies in India and elsewhere make this impossible. The essence of the peasant condition is and has ever been constant and significant interaction with other parts of the social order.

Historical studies of agrarian arrangements in India are perhaps among the earliest of the 'modern scientific history' undertaken in Asia. The first serious and systematic studies of agrarian relations and problems occurred over a century ago when British administrators, bent upon better understanding, or perhaps simply justifying, revenue policies in British Indian territories, began to explore the development of land relations, tenure, and related matters of the past. These studies were published as bureaucratic reports and minutes, as personal memoirs or, as in Madras, as parts of the first district manuals in the late nineteenth century. These were later utilized by such scholar-administrators as B. H. Baden-Powell in his monumental, three-volume *Land Systems of British India*.[10] Without denigrating these pioneer efforts which sought to make sense of what appeared to many officials to be chaos, even during the late nineteenth century, the results of their inquiries led as often to a distortion as to a clarification of historical agrarian relationships. Rationalizing existing practices, principles, and policies in the face of mounting criticism from a small group of educated Indians as well as from critics in England could scarcely have led to the best analysis of historical landed relationships. Yet, much of the past record of these relationships was clarified and, without doubt, some of the most felicitous moments in the career of the British bureaucracy of nineteenth century India may have been when some few Englishmen screened fragmentary agrarian records through their intelligent and often sympathetic experience.

Studies of historical agrarian relations — narrowly by British administrator-scholars and somewhat more broadly by historians of India — have inevitably been strongly coupled with land revenue organization. British administrators, concerned with revenue often above all else, created this stultifying legacy, and it has been perpetuated by nationalist Indian historians concerned with attacking British policies. Revenue is but one aspect of agrarian organization, but in the absence of effective, bureaucratic government — a condition not attained in India until the nineteenth century —

[10] Published in 3 vols, OUP, London, 1892.

revenue transfers beyond quite restricted localities was an unimportant matter. Even under the Mughals, the most effective pre-modern government in India, regular and routine assessment and collection of land revenue for remittance to the 'state' was limited in a variety of ways. However, in contrast to revenue matters, the broad historical relationship between agrarian organization and peasant society was a central one until very recent times in India. This is so true that it may be wondered that with the considerable interest in agrarian studies involving revenue, land tenure, agricultural trade and debt, scholars should not have engaged more directly the web of peasant social and cultural relations with the land.

In part, at least, the reason for the neglect must be recognized to stem from the vagueness, the potential omnicompetence, of the concepts 'peasant society' and 'agrarian system'. Real as cows, manure, market places and prices, tax collectors, and cultivators themselves may have been, the ways of analysing these and other agrarian matters are artifacts of the analyst. The system of agrarian relationships examined by the economist concerned with the production of a single unit of agricultural production, a field or farm, is different from that of the economist concerned with the output of all grain producers; and different from these two are the relationships examined by the rural sociologist interested in voluntary associations among rural families or an agronomist concerned with plant diseases. Each will have a conception of agrarian relationships appropriate to his inquiry; each will examine a portion of the totality.

Daniel Thorner writing on Indian land reform problems in *The Agrarian Prospect in India* states that, 'the agrarian structure is, after all, not an external framework within which various classes function, but rather it is the sum total of ways in which each group operates in relation to other groups'. Notwithstanding this comprehensive definition, Thorner is concerned with only a part of the totality of relations he speaks of, namely those related to the politics of contemporary land reform.[11] The problem is not restricted to India. The Soviet scholar, E. A. Kosminsky, in his *Studies in the Agrarian History of England in the Thirteenth Century* dealing with the manorial system, could set aside issues obviously connected

[11] Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, University Press, Delhi, 1959.

with his problem — agricultural techniques, climate, soils, and the relationship of livestock to cultivation — on the basis that they did not bear centrally upon his topic of investigation.[12] And so it must be for any investigator; the choice of concepts and the meanings which are given to them must be suited to the problem at hand and the requirements of the clearest possible exposition of findings.

The idea of the agrarian system in the present work focuses upon peasant society and culture in relationship to land. Along these lines, work on the Mughal period is the best in the small class of Indian historical studies dealing with historical agrarian relationships. By far the best is that of Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*. One of the group of able scholars at Aligarh Muslim University, Habib sought to critically examine 'not only [the]. . . land revenue administration. . . but also [the] agrarian economy and social structure'.[13] Though he corrects and amends earlier work on this period, notably that of W. H. Moreland's *Agrarian System of Moslem India*,[14] Habib is essentially concerned with the Mughal power structure rather than the relationship of land and land control to the economy and social structure of the time. Appropriately however, he discusses different groups of the landed population in North India upon which the century and a half of Mughal supremacy was based : an oppressed peasantry, various kinds of local intermediaries, especially zamindars, and the Muslim warrior élite. Moreland's work, for all its pioneering significance, was more narrowly focused than Habib's, being a discussion of the importance of revenue assignees upon whom the main burden of agrarian control rested in all but a few years of the long period of Muslim domination over the North-Indian countryside. The idea of the agrarian system within which both Habib and Moreland frame their inquiries reflect their concentration upon political analysis. In both cases, the study of the agrarian system was essential for understanding power relations in this best-organized and most powerful of the states of medieval India. And, if Habib is correctly understood here, his argument is that the demise of the Mughal state in the early eighteenth century

[12] Op. cit., p. viii.

[13] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1963. Note changes in his argument in subsequent publications.

[14] W.H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge, 1929.

was the result of a crisis in agrarian relations in which a substantial portion of the peasantry, alienated by Mughal officials, threw in its lot with pre-Mughal locality leaders.[15]

Peasant agrarian relationships are aspects of social and cultural systems; they are human adaptations to the natural environment within a social and cultural framework. In the Indian sub-continent alone, one must speak of a very large number of historical peasant societies and cultures over India's long history. This is to underscore the truism of Indian diversity from an early time. Differences in languages and cultural traditions as well as in the patterns of social relationships among Indians combined with the differential constraints and opportunities afforded by the variety of environmental settings of the sub-continent as a whole or any of its sections — all of these would have contributed to the great mosaic of cultural regions of medieval times and later. Among these one would expect to find different patterns of development and change resulting from the quite unique historical courses through which each went. However, this remains a largely theoretical proposition, since only the most preliminary work has been done on the classification of agrarian systems of modern India and even less on historical agrarian systems.[16] The latter task awaits two scholarly developments. The first of these is more research on the history of the middle period, especially social and economic history of the sort which Habib has done for the Mughal period. But of equal, if not prior, importance, thought must be given to the formulation for all or most of the sub-continent of those social and cultural factors which, along with ecological factors, shape agrarian systems whether contemporary or historical.

The major factors are generally recognized, and some have already been briefly touched upon here. In economic terms, the salient feature is cultivation of the soil and occupations related to that — animal husbandry, artisanship to provide the basic implements for agriculture and for peasant household use as well

[15] Habib, op. cit.

[16] Notice should be taken of the work of Dr Chen Han-Seng provisionally entitled 'Agrarian Regions of India and Pakistan' and based upon the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India. Though forty-five years out of date, the addition of some more recent evidence and the proposed publication of a separate volume of maps make this project, being carried out in cooperation with the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne), important.

as to provide goods for more general exchange. These attributes are shared by other kinds of economic orders — primitive ones, archaic collectivist ones, and some modern ones, hence it is difficult to speak of a 'peasant economics' as distinctive. Some scholars have, in fact, sought to differentiate significant aspects of peasant economic operations.[17] The difficulty of delineating something called 'peasant economics' arises from the large and diverse number of peasant relations, past and present, of which we have often disturbingly fragmentary evidence. In part, too, the difficulty arises from the fact that 'peasant' and 'peasantry' are not essentially economic, but sociological categories. It is the nature of his social relationships, where he lives and with whom he interacts, that most authoritatively identifies the peasant. Notwithstanding these problems of definition, it is possible to speak of peasant economic orders as those in which the major forms of wealth are generated from cultivation of the land by family-sized units and primarily for their subsistence and where industrial and service activities are relatively insignificant except as an adjunct to the cultivation of land within circumscribed localities.

How land is made to yield this wealth varies in South India. It may come from swidden tracts of relatively sparse population, or from intensely irrigated agriculture in relatively densely populated tracts, or some intermediate variant; this is culturally determined within the possibilities of the natural setting of particular places and times. How wealth, or 'surplus', is apportioned among cultivators, among groups of non-cultivating dependents, and between cultivators and those who exercise political power over them are critical matters for those of the society as well as for those who wish to understand that society. In economic terms, peasants are not easily distinguished from others for whom land is the major source of wealth. Always and everywhere, peasants, like any producers must deploy a portion of their production to maintain and replace their population, tools, houses, seed, and livestock in order to

[17] The critical works on this question of whether it is necessary to consider a special mode of analysis of peasant economics remain: Alexander Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy*, ed. Daniel Thorner, tr. from the Russian by R.E.F. Smith, American Economic Association, Homewood, 1966; Karoly Polanyi, *et al.*, *Trade and Markets in Early Empires* (Free Press, Glencoe, 1957) which argue the affirmative; *contra:* Raymond Firth and Basil S. Yamey, *Capital, Saving, and Credit in Peasant Societies,* Aldine Press, Chicago, 1965. *See* Marshal Sahlins, *Stone-Age Economics*, Aldine, Chicago, 1972.

survive. This is essentially a family responsibility in a peasant society and may include several households within a peasant settlement. Similarly, peasants must, like others who live in communities, invest some portion of their time, effort, and wealth in the continuation of the social collectivity of which they are part. This contribution appears to be a composite one of personal participation and a transfer of family wealth. Finally, peasants, like others, must make their terms with those whose superior power commands tribute or taxes, rent or interest. This may be done by the individual peasant household or, perhaps more often, by the peasant community as a whole. In a peasant society, the recipients of this payment are often themselves local figures with whom some degree of face-to-face interaction exists even if, as in some cases, that local personage is an agent for or beneficiary of some less proximate authority. What distinguishes the peasant solution to the problems of maintenance and replacement of productive capability, of the preservation of the community, and of meeting the share of the demands from external authority is that the scope of these activities is highly localized. In consequence, one of the most serious and characteristic problems for the peasant community is that of balancing its internal, local requirements against the external demands of powerful warriors, agents of a powerful state, or members of protected mercantile groups.[18]

External liens upon peasant production are the consequence of asymmetrical power relationships, and for some analysts, or for some problems, the terms of power between the peasantry and the external world constitute the most important characteristic of peasant society. Without denying the importance of this condition under which all peasants necessarily live, undue stress upon exogenous pressure has led to the distortion of two other aspects of the political condition of the peasantry. The first is the degree to which peasants manage most of their own community problems without external interference. Thus, onerous, and at times gratifying, and always important as the relations with powerful outsiders often are for its welfare, and ultimately for its survival, the peasant community can and does retain control over most of the essential activities upon which its society depends. And, except in the most effectively organized state system — a condition which

[18] These issues are clearly discussed in Eric Wolf, *Peasants*, Foundation of Modern Anthropology Series, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 15.

is only infrequently achieved until very recent times — the residual competence of the peasant community ensures that the relationship between the peasant locality and those powerful enough to demand a portion of its wealth does not leave the peasantry entirely disarmed. This is the second, often underestimated, aspect of the political context of the peasant. Through coalitions of various kinds, the ability of peasants to cope with the many kinds of externally powerful can be formidable. The ultimate weapon of the peasant is also his most difficult to use. That is, to abscond, to desert the lands and jurisdiction of an overlord whose demands have come to exceed the benefits of the protection of his overlordship. Resort may be taken with other locality overlords under more promising conditions, or relief may be sought in forest and hill tracts with all of their menaces. Desertion of established homesteads and lands, however modestly endowed these may be, can never be lightly undertaken, of course, nor can the other means which peasants may have for countering excessive demands. Yet, in South India there is early and continuous evidence of peasant movement of which only part can be attributed to political causes. Outside the deltaic regions, cultivating folk appear frequently to have moved, often great distances, to improve their prospects. The actual or potential mobility of peasants for whatever reason, would compel any great or small overlord to come realistically to terms with the requirements of the peasant community. Thus, while the asymmetrical power relationship remains an essential aspect of peasant society, it must be seen as qualified, as a balancing of advantage and disadvantage between the peasant community and the external world.

Attachment to some narrow locality is a, and for some purposes, *the* salient characteristic of the peasant social system. This is at once a source of strength and weakness in economic and political terms. The web of relationships beginning with those within the peasant family and extending, through kinship groupings and coalitions, well beyond the peasant village constitutes strength because it provides the peasant with a durable nexus for cooperation and resource pooling at critical times. When there is personal misfortune or community danger, these relationships may be relied upon to blunt the full impact of misfortune upon any single family. The assurance provided by this interwoven texture of social, economic, and ceremonial relationships of the peasant

locality exacts a price, of course. Part of the labour and produce of each household must be expended in maintaining these relationships; individual and family decisions regarding welfare would weigh internal household requirements against outstanding obligations to others within their large social universe.

Studies of such a complex universe may, perhaps must, concentrate on only a part of the network of significant relationships within the peasant community or on the nature and dynamics of linkages between the peasant community and other parts of the social and cultural order. According to the question being researched, stress can be placed upon any viable aspect of the totality of relationships which comprise peasant society, where the test of viability is the most plausible explanation of what happened, or is happening, and why.

Historians of Indian culture have typically concerned themselves — when they have addressed the problems of the peasantry — with the external linkages between the peasantry and the larger world of which it is a part. Too often, the historian's level of analysis has seemed to require an assumption about the nature of the Indian peasantry which, if not incorrect, reduces the probability of understanding the complex and changing society of peasants. That is, the assumption that the peasantry in any part of the sub-continent is a single, undifferentiated, conservative ('traditional' is often used) part of the social system in an almost constantly defensive or compliant posture in relation to the aggressive world around it. In this two-part model of peasant and other, there are few distinctions drawn among different groups comprising a peasantry at any time and place, and there is an almost complete neglect of the processes governing the constant inter-relationships between the two spheres. Granted that such simplifying assumptions, or sets, about 'the peasantry' are frequently required by the nature of the evidence, it is possible at certain times and in certain parts of the historical Indian cultural sphere to make finer discriminations about peasant life and society by attempting to perceive the system of relationships between peasants and others and among peasant groups themselves, as it were, 'from the bottom'.

Focusing upon the peasant community in its relations with others in the social order from this level requires a more complex model of peasant society than most historians are accustomed or, apparently, prepared to contemplate. From the outset, it is neces-

sary to envisage, and to the extent that evidence permits, to reconstruct a social system composed of a variety of groupings in a place which is defined by a common set of bonds of these groupings to some particular tract of land. That is the arena.[19] In India, while such groups tend to have quite different social positions, goals, and styles, and often different contacts beyond the community, reflecting the stratified and segmented nature of Indian social organization, there is a strong commitment to the village and locality as in other peasant societies. Corporateness is the consequence of joint concern with shared problems within the community and without; yet there may be quite different perceptions of internal or external pressure by the various strata and segments of a peasant community. Each must, however, come to terms with that pressure within the framework of a common community response.

External pressures themselves vary. Some pressures upon the peasant community may generate internal responses by the community and leave durable internal referents as markers or traces of intrusions from beyond the community. Others may not. Thus, a pillaging army in a peasant locality constitutes a more formidable, immediate threat to welfare than a small band of warriors living permanently in some nearby hills. The former may raid villages, take all they can, and leave. No adaptive response is likely to be effective or even relevant. However, the small warrior band which cannot be adequately defended against nor extirpated must be dealt with through means which satisfy the demands of the threatening warriors without simultaneously incurring excessive dislocation within the community. Each of these dangerous confrontations may leave its mark: in devastated fields, dead defenders of the village, or inadequate stock or seed against the needs of the immediate future, in the first case, and in the other case the consequences may be more durable such as a new or modified set of land arrangements, a modification of village and locality leadership, and perhaps new village and locality names.

To deal with the complex internal structure of South Indian peasant societies and the equally complex linkages among peasant localities, the concept of 'pyramidal segmentation' has been adop-

[19] The term 'arena' has been used by F.G. Bailey to provide a spatial dimension to sociological relationships. *Tribe, Caste, and Nation: A Study of Political Activity and Political Change in Highland Orissa*, OUP, Bombay, 1960, pp. 269-70.

ted in the present work. This concept has been found most useful in the discussion of the political organization of the Chola and Vijayanagara states because of the manner in which political and social elements were combined in medieval South India.

'Pyramidal segmentation' refers to persistent combinatorial patterns among social elements which are distinct and often opposed. Such distinct elements are regarded analytically as social 'segments'. These elements are parts of a social whole, which ultimately extended to the peoples of the sub-continent, to which the term 'Indic' may be applied; they are also parts of the many cultural regions into which medieval India was partitioned. In short, they are differentiated elements of a single, universal moral system. In the usage of medieval dharma texts, these segments, as generic categories, were called *kula* (agnatic or cognate kinsmen), *śreṇī* (occupational groups consisting of several castes), and *gaṇa* or *pūga* (territorial assemblies).[20] Such segments combined to make up the numerous local social contexts of medieval South India, and these segments also combined, or massed, to form supralocal combinations, or pyramids, hence the term 'pyramidal segmentation'.

Within peasant localities (*nāḍu*s) of Chola country, as discussed in Chapter III, these social segments would include various groups. Among these were cultivators who may have settled in a locality as subordinate or client groups of the dominant peasant community called *nāṭṭār*; other groups may have consisted of non-cultivating people such as herdsmen or artisans; yet others might be persons and groups assimilated into the expanding sedentary agriculture of the time (often as dependents of established local groups) from marginal tracts where they might have been swidden cultivators or even hunters. Many of such groups could occasionally combine as massed groupings of right and left castes (*valangai* and *idangai*), an important feature of supralocal social organization in many parts of South India from about the eleventh century; this is discussed in Chapter V. The most significant aspect of the massing of primary local segments as supralocal formations was political; it is the potential massing of local segments that provided the foundation of states in medieval South India.

[20] See the discussion of these terms and their variant meanings in P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law)*, 2nd. ed., Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1974, v. 3, pp. 280-1.

The Chola and Vijayanagara states of medieval South India are seen as 'segmentary states' in the discussion of chapters seven and eight. This designation is adopted from a conception of political organization most comprehensively dealt with by the African anthropologist Aidan Southall.[21] Seen by many scholars as 'incipient states' or 'proto states', Southall proposes that segmentary states comprise a major type of political organization not only in Africa, where his work was done and where the concept of the segmentary state has greatest currency, but in other cultural contexts as well: European and Asian. In the segmentary state, the parts or segments of which the state is composed are seen as prior to the formal state; these segments are structurally as well as morally coherent units in themselves. Together, these parts or segments comprise a state in their recognition of a sacred ruler whose overlordship is of a moral sort and is expressed in an essentially ritual idiom. It is precisely in such terms that South Indian kings are best perceived, and it is for this reason that the concept of segmentary state so commends itself for the present analysis.

Most scholars of Indian social structure have acknowledged the segmentary character of localized Indian societies just as they have acknowledged the profound imprint of peasant institutions. But, some of these same scholars have treated such structural realities — of the past as well as of the present — as secondary considerations, as epiphenomena, before the commanding holistic culture of caste, of Hinduism and, during the pre-modern era at any rate, of great monarchical states. Here, the language of 'segmentary' or 'tribal', of 'structurally relative' (rather than absolute) groupings in society; of 'complementary opposition' or 'pyramidal segmentation' would seem to have no place. Here, the culture of caste, of purity and pollution, of hierarchy, of systems of salvation, religions based upon highly sophisticated textual sources, and of sacred kings closely identified with the great gods of those religions would appear to make unnecessary such arcane concepts drawn from analyses of distant Africa. And yet, this is not true.

The theory of South Indian kingship as articulated in medieval law texts (*dharmaśāstra*) and other literary works as well as in the normative language of medieval inscriptions, especially the often

[21] A.W. Southall, *Alur Society*, W. Heffer, Cambridge, 1956.

lengthy inscriptional preambles, speak of sacred kingship, not of bureaucratic or constitutional monarchy as often construed by South Indian historians. And, concrete historical evidence of the activities of royal figures — whether these are military (and the king is seen as a great conqueror), or religious (and the king is seen as the greatest of devotees of gods whom he protects and upon whom he confers rich gifts), or whether in the more rare royal intervention as the upholders of law or dharma — these are the activities of sacral and incorporative kingship. South Indian kings were essentially ritual figures except in the often circumscribed core territories of their capitals where they commanded and managed resources and men by virtue of their compelling coercive power (*kṣatra*). They are the most important symbols of the sacred, moral order to which all men must belong and, as such, theirs is a sacred and moral authority (dharma) beyond the limited territory of their *kṣatra*. Given such a conception of kingship, only a segmentary political order — one bound together alone by the common allegiance of many chiefs to a sacred centre — can be appropriate.

A constant factor in this analysis is technology. Techniques and devices with which South Indian peasants manipulated their environment in order to produce food and other valuable products appeared to have remained unchanged over the several centuries covered. Swamp cultivation of rice utilizing bullocks for ploughing and riverine irrigation were well established in very early South India. The greatest hydraulic works in some parts of the South Indian macro region may date from before the earliest period examined here. According to some historians, major irrigation works were constructed in the Kaveri prior to the Cholas. The most impressive of these was the Grand Anicut, seventeen miles below modern Tiruchirapalli, a masonry dam over 1000 feet long, up to 60 feet thick, and 18 feet high.[22] More technically reliable estimates of the date of the Grand Anicut place it in middle or late Chola times. It is notable that new, substantial riverine construction here did not occur again until late in the nineteenth century. As to 'tanks', the embanked reservoirs which cover a major portion of the plain and part of the South Indian upland tracts, British irrigation specialists of the nineteenth century

[22] F.E. Morgan, 'Irrigation', *Southern India*, ed. Somerset Payne, Foreign and Colonial Compiling Publication Co., 1914-15, London, p. 285.

frequently commented upon the virtual completeness with which surface irregularities had been exploited for this purpose long before their time and found little scope for the construction of new ones.[23] The appearance of unchanging technique in the utilization of land — a limited set of implements and a fixed repertoire of crops and cultivation practices — results, in part, from a paucity of evidence. However, that is not entirely the case, for there is considerable direct evidence that South Indian 'peasant ecotypes' were not basically altered from perhaps the ninth to the nineteenth century.

A peasant ecotype[24] can be defined as a system consisting of two sets of agricultural relationships within a range of ecological possibilities. The first involves energy transfers among organic elements including humans and animals and the stored energy of crops which nourish men and animals. The second set of relationships involves inorganic agencies, or devices, which men have used to assist in energy transfers. These include: implements, fences, machines for raising water from wells or reservoirs, and constructions for storing or draining water from cultivatable fields. Organic and inorganic elements in combination with such complex factors as soils, topography and, more transitorily, water-balances tend to become relatively persistent systems which are related to social and cultural concomitants either assumed by a particular ecotype or the consequence of it.

The hazards of much peasant agriculture invariably produce defensive agricultural strategies which make it appear to be unchanging. Proven techniques, tools, seed varieties, and timings of certain operations are transmitted over time in songs and proverbs so that a catalogue of agricultural proverbs can probably be compared to the Sanskrit literary genre, *sūtra*, in being an outline of reflective and orally transmitted knowledge. An ecotype is thus not a 'natural' system, but a socio-cultural sub-system to be understood within a larger socio-cultural context.

[23] Reports of Major R.H. Sankey on Mysore irrigation in 1866 stated that 59.7 per cent of the princely state was under tank irrigation and estimated that there was one tank and one village in every square mile: cited in Herbert M. Wilson, *Irrigation in India (U.S. House of Representatives, The Executive Documents of the First Session of the Fifty-Second Congress, 1891-92)*, Government Printing Office, Washington, v. 18.

[24] The brief discussion of ecotypes by Wolf, op. cit., pp. 18 ff., remains one of the best and most accessible.

There exists no ecotypology for South India, contemporary or historical, and to develop one for modern South India would require elaborate statistical and field studies. Extant historical evidence would probably not support the formulation of an ecotypology for any time earlier than the eighteenth century, and then only fragmentarily. To the extent that there has been an effort to classify general cultivation systems in the literature on South India, a simple threefold classification inherited from British revenue usage has been relied upon: wet, dry, and 'garden' agriculture. Eleventh century Chola inscriptions refer to three slightly different categories, namely dry land (*kāṭṭārambam* or *puñcai*, modern 'punjah') wet land (*nīrārambam*) irrigated by a small tank or riverine channels, and swidden plots (*kummari*) of 'forest people' (*vēḍar*).[25] These designations are gross indicators of basic ecotypes, and their limitations are obvious.

British revenue and settlement records, even cursorily studied, yield a long list of types of 'wet' cultivation, 'dry' and 'garden' cultivation for any South Indian district or part of a district. There are, for example, fundamental differences among perennially irrigated riverine tracts as those of the Kaveri and Godavari-Kistna deltas, those tracts served by channels of minor tributaries of these rivers, those irrigated tracts dependent upon the catchment of run off from minor streams in tanks, and, finally, those tracts which depend for their irrigation upon tanks which are wholly rain-fed. Similarly, dry-crop or 'garden' cultivation carried out at the fringes of perennially irrigated lands and therefore affected by a higher water table is quite different from the full and hazardous dependence upon rainfall alone as occurs in many parts of South India. What constitutes 'garden cultivation' in British revenue usage is perhaps the most variable category of all. Sometimes 'garden' refers to 'semi-dry' cultivation as in parts of Chingleput and Coimbatore where one type of rice cultivation cycle begins as a dry crop and changes to a wet crop if and when water availability permits. At other times, 'garden' may be used to designate

[25] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, (*Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, Madras, 1917, v. 1, pp. 351-2) discusses a Tamil inscription from Kolar District which has received considerable attention. The text of the inscription is found in *E. C.*, v. 10, Mulbagal Taluk, no 49a, with the Tamil transliteration on p. 102 and an English translation on p. 86, in pt 2 of the volume. In the Tamil text, line 17 refers to *punsai* and line 18 to *ēri-kīl*, or 'under the tank'.

very extensive holdings as in parts of Chingleput, Salem, Coimbatore, and the Arcots where a limited amount of assured moisture is available for some part of a crop cycle. Still at other times 'garden cultivation' describes very small holdings adjoining house sites everywhere.

It is not only that there are many kinds of 'wet', 'dry', and 'garden' cultivation in all parts of South India, but combinations of these in particular settings defy by their variety even the most tentative classification. The presence or failure of an irrigation source with its direct effect upon water balances in the locality can permit or prohibit forms of dry or garden cultivation dependent upon well water; the presence or absence of livestock affects manure availability and the practice of compacting the germinating seed in some forms of dry rice cultivation. And so on; there are an almost endless combination of interdependencies for which there is evidence in contemporary South India. Nor is this the end of the matter: each of these combinations sets up unique decision situations for the cultivator.

Agricultural strategies are drastically different according to whether a tract is perennially watered, partially watered as in well or tank irrigation, or completely dependent upon rainfall. In the older riverine irrigated areas of the deltas, a basic strategy of cultivation could be followed almost invariantly. Where special conditions or problems existed, solutions could be routinized as in the productive, low-lying areas of Tanjavur and Tenali in Guntur where stagnant water presented special problems. Or, in the wet rice cultivation of Kolleru (Collari) Lake in Kistna district and along the banks of many of the larger tanks elsewhere on the Coromandel plain, cultivators developed plant varieties capable of rising with the filling of the lake or tank after the south-west monsoon rains, and they developed techniques for harvesting from boats. Garden cultivators relying upon irrigation from wells for part of their overall moisture requirements are faced with a wholly different strategic regime. They are required regularly to rotate crops so as to provide the optimum balance of soil use and nutrition. But more importantly, they have had to establish contingency plans for the timings of certain cultivation systems of the garden class. That is, where some irrigation could be relied upon, there was a wide range of options open to the cultivator, and decisions were constantly required. Where cultivation strategy may appear

most crucial is where there is no reliable source of moisture and operations are entirely rain-dependent. In such situations, ironically cultivation strategy is most likely to be defensive to the point of drastically limiting possible options. Here is found a reliance upon hardy millets, sown at a high seed rate (ratio of output to seed input), so as to maximize a return under the most difficult circumstances. Therefore, the general classification of 'dry' cultivation, in which there may appear to be the maximum scope for and need of optimizing strategies because there is too little water available for the practice of highly routinized swamp cultivation, becomes almost as routinized as fully irrigated cultivation precisely because there is insufficient moisture available to permit anything but defensiveness in the dry cultivator. Cultivators of the intermediate category, 'garden' crop cultivators, with their experience and modest stock of wealth, were perhaps the most peripatetic.

Even these gross variations in the strategic component in South Indian agriculture suggest certain significant social and political concomitants. In tracts where there was little need to make constant judgements about when to plough and what to plant, where cultivation operations were relatively secure from the vagaries of rainfall or, conversely, relatively defensive and invariant because of them, the important management decisions were quite different from those of cultivators for whom even a limited supply of water was reasonably assured. Where conditions of adequate moisture supply and adequate storage facilities permitted swamp cultivation of rice, cultivation practices were sufficiently routine to be left to low status labourers for the most part. Here, the crucial issues for decision were those involving the maintenance and expansion of lands for which the requisite annual seventy-five inches of water could be obtained. In most tracts of this kind, an élite without cultivating skill or experience could dominate local life effectively. Examples of this are the Brahmans of the Chola period and forest-bred warriors, such as the *kaḷḷar* or *maravar*, who came to control delta land during the Vijayanagara period. Where, as in parts of the upland areas of Coimbatore, Salem, and parts of the Karnataka, conditions favoured reliable water availability for what has been called 'garden' or 'semi-dry' cultivation, social and political patterns have tended to reflect the dominance of groups who retained, even as they do today, close management of cultivation operations. Here, a different élite structure emerged from

that of the deltaic areas, thus constituting a significant variant of South Indian society and culture. In those tracts where moisture was so scarce or unreliable as to make doubtful the survival of even the most hazardous settlement of agricultural communities, agriculturists remained, materially at least, at the margins of the mainstream of South Indian life until means were discovered of converting these lands to productive wet or garden cultivation. These means, in many cases slowly, became available during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Such social and cultural factors associated with various ecotypes can only rarely be documented in the earliest periods examined in this study; the relationships generated by them must therefore be assumed. Thus, in holding that agrarian technology remained unchanging over the course of almost a thousand years and that the array of major ecotypes remained fixed in the same period, there is no assertion that the full complement of medieval ecotypes is perfectly known or understood. That kind of assessment lies in the future. For the present argument, this assumption provides a way of focusing on the social and cultural factors which operated over a portion of that long period of a thousand years to give the South Indian agrarian system its shape and continuity. If there were significant changes in technology or in the repertoire of basic ecotypes of South India within the period, if new ways of combining organic and inorganic factors related to agriculture were developed, then these left no trace in the evidence currently available.

CHAPTER I

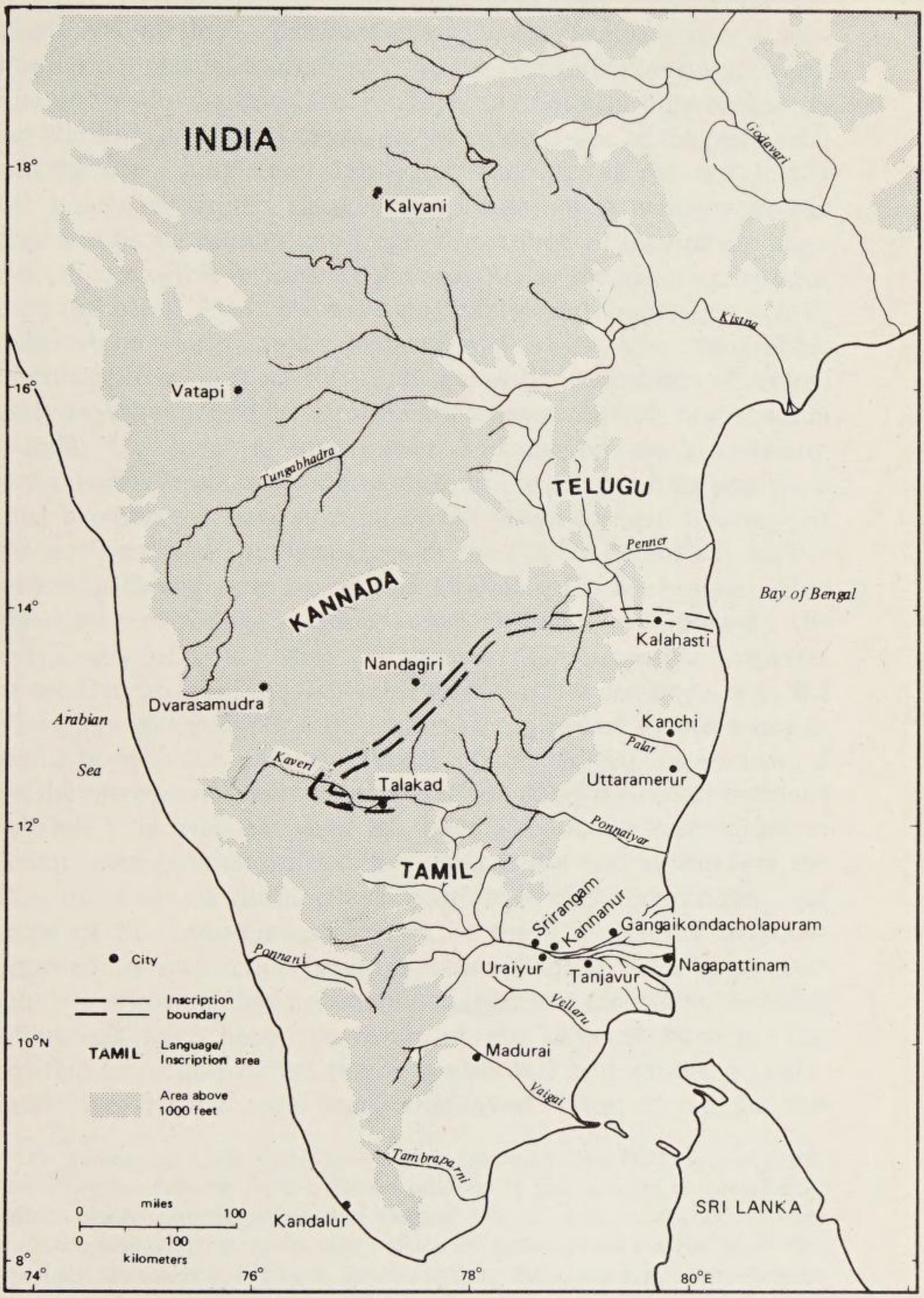
South India: The Region

South India as considered here is a complex, composite region consisting of diverse physical, social, and cultural components. Definition of its distinguishing characteristics constitutes a crucial and, often, difficult problem. To a large extent, the difficulty is conceptual. That is, delimiting the distribution of some element or related elements which distinguish one segment of the time-space continuum from another requires both adequate and relevant distinguishing elements chosen to constitute the region. The adequacy or relevance of the elements according to which a region is defined are related to and are alone justified by the problem at hand. Naïvely conceived spatial units of study have been called 'traditional' or 'historical' regions, and it is in a naïve sense that terms like 'Bengal' or 'Andhra' or 'Maharashtra' have frequently been used. The choice of such spatial units may of course be perfectly adequate and relevant if properly defined. But they ought not to be selected for the same reason that men climb mountains — because they are (or at some time were) there.[1]

The difficulty of treating broad regions as units of study as done here in the case of 'South India' is obvious. If it were not obvious, a review of the early historiography on the Deccan would make it so. Since R.G. Bhandarkar,[2] around the turn of the century, the 'Deccan region' has received the serious attention of historians who have studied the vast, highly differentiated expanse as a single spatial entity. The presumed validity of treating the entire peninsula as a unit of study arises primarily from physical facts.

[1] The author acknowledges the benefits to his thinking about the issue of regions and regionalism of the seminar convened at Duke University, May 1966 and the subsequent publication by Robert I. Crane (ed.), *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies: An Exploratory Study*, Monograph no. 5, Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1967.

[2] R.G. Bhandarkar, *Early History of the Deccan* (Collected Works), Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1972.



I-1 The South Indian Region

Thus, the northern face of the Deccan plateau — the Vindhya – Chota Nagpur line — has been treated as an effective barrier to substantial population movement from the Gangetic plain southward. The double impasses of the Vindhya and Satpura hills backed by the Narbada and Tapti rivers, on the western side of the peninsula, and the dense jungle and deeply cut landforms in the east, justify the widely recognized status of the peninsula as a major *natural* region. Discontinuities in topography cannot, of themselves, however, create viable regions for the purposes of the historian or most other scholars. There are few significant social, linguistic, artistic, political, or administrative elements with which these topographic discontinuities are reliably and explicitly associated. Even as early as Ashoka, and perhaps the Mauryan precursor, Mahapadma Nanda, Gangetic military power had moved south-westward, and possibly south-eastward as well, to the coasts of the peninsula thus bypassing a large portion of the jungle-covered territory on the northern and southern faces of the double peninsular barrier and establishing outposts in the Godavari-Kistna basins. These extensions of Gangetic power were probably prompted by the availability of gold, iron, and copper. Subsequently, kingdoms of the Deccan from the Satavahanas of the first century A.D. to the Marathas of the eighteenth century A.D., looked as often northward, beyond the natural barriers of the plateau, as southward for the extension of their tributary regions and for cultural contact.[3]

While it is true that there has been a relatively lower order of contact and interaction between the peoples and cultures of the Deccan (taken as the northern portion of peninsular India) and those of the Indo-Gangetic plain or the Coromandel coast, as opposed to interaction among peoples within these latter two spheres, historians have probably exaggerated the extent to which differences have been the result of the physical barriers. The positive attraction of the major continental and southern peninsular river basins have been overlooked. Thus, if one focuses

[3] G. Yazdani (ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan* (2 vols), OUP, London, 1960. This otherwise valuable work is flawed precisely in that most of its contributing authors ignore contacts between the 'Deccan' and the northern, continental parts of the sub-continent, on the one side, and the southern peninsula on the other. See, especially, the essays in v. 1 by H. Raychaudhuri, 'The Geography of the Deccan', pp. 1-65 and Gurty Venket Rao, 'The Pre-Sātavāhana and Sātavāhana Periods', pp. 65-149.

upon the nodal attraction of the two great basins of the Ganges and the Kaveri rather than upon the peninsular barrier to substantial population movement, a different conception of north-south, sub-continental discontinuity emerges. This conception affects how one will view the entire peninsula as a unit of historical study and the relationship of portions of the peninsula to the whole and the rest of the sub-continent.

W.M. Day does as much in conceiving of the sub-continent as harbouring two perennial cores of civilization: the Gangetic plain with its extension into the Chambal basin, or 'Hindu-Aryan India', and the Coromandel plain with its extensions to the table-lands of the interior peninsula, or 'Hindu-Dravidian India'.[4] Each of the cores consisted of great populations and each attracted the interests of quite distant people. What separated these primary cores of civilization was not simply the upthrusting Deccan plateau, but a broad cultural and political zone between the Kistna in the south and the Kaimur Range in the north. This intermediate zone between the two, primary cores of civilization has its own ancient historical career which was consistently influenced by the developments of the Gangetic and Coromandel cores and little affected by natural barriers. It is not contended that this conception of what is, in effect, a trizonal (north-central-south) rather than the conventional bizonal (north-south) division of the sub-continent overcomes the basic difficulties of using gross division of this sort. However, for the problem at hand, this kind of distinction may serve to focus attention more clearly upon the perennially influential character of the Coromandel plain for a major part of the sub-continent. Moreover, it is ultimately to recognize that, for many historical purposes, it may be most useful to concentrate upon nodal regions or cores, rather than upon uniform regions, or boundaries.

The term 'South India' has been used at times to designate the entire peninsula, but that is not its meaning here. In this study, 'South India' refers generally to that portion of peninsular India south of the Karnataka watershed (excluding modern Kerala) on the west, and the Kistna-Godavari delta on the east. Within this portion of the peninsula, there has existed a region characterized by a high degree of sharing of significant social, cultural,

[4] Winifred M. Day, 'Relative Permanence of Former Boundaries in India', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 65, no. 3 (December 1949), p. 114.

and political elements and an order of interaction such as to constitute a viable unit for the study of certain problems.

Delineating what might be called the 'macro region' for this study that portion of the peninsula which lies south of an imaginary line from about thirteen degrees north latitude, at the Western Ghats, to about eighteen degrees of north latitude on the Bay of Bengal, still leaves a complex, composite region. It includes most of what has been called the 'Dravidian culture sphere' following the linguistic usage first suggested by Francis W. Ellis in 1816 to describe a family of languages in the southern peninsula.[5] Spate employs the term 'Dravidian S[outh]' to refer to this part of the sub-continent and sees it as consisting of a group of 'perennial nuclear regions' of which he lists: Kalinga country or Orissa, Andhra or Telugu country, Chola and Pandya parts of Tamil country, and the isolated south-western littoral of Kerala or Malabar.[6] A.H. Dani has also spoken of the portion of the peninsula south of the Kistna River as a paleographic region.[7] In social terms the southern peninsula has also been recognized as distinctive. Irawati Karve delineates a separate southern zone of kinship organization which includes Karnataka, Andhra, Tamilnadu, and Kerala;[8] Marriott, in his discussion of caste ranking among Coromandel peoples has also suggested that parts of Karnataka and Andhra share Coromandel characteristics.[9] Such general attributions alone do not justify the usage 'South India' adopted here, but they do support the definition of macro region used here by indicating its broad cultural and civilizational correlates.

Within that macro region, primacy may be accorded to the Tamil plain as a major source of the influence of civilization. The Tamil poetry of the first several centuries A.D., better than anything symbolizes this primacy, for classical, or Sangam, poetry

[5] T. Burrow and M. Emeneau, *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1961, p. v.; hereafter D.E.D.

[6] O.H.K. Spate, *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography*, Methuen & Co., London, 1954, p. 148.

[7] *Indian Paleography*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963, p. 193.

[8] *Kinship Organization in India*, Deccan College Monograph Series, no. 11, Deccan College, Poona, 1953, p. 180.

[9] McKim Marriott, *Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan*, Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Poona, 1965, p. 53.

— in the anthologized form we have it today — are creations guided by a highly sophisticated poetic canon, and the resultant poetic corpus establishes the Tamil language as the most enduring, living classical tradition in India.[10] Institutions of Sanskrit and Prakrit learning were contemporary with the production of most classical Tamil poems and clearly influenced this latter poetic tradition. The very term *śaṅgam* to designate this poetry derives from a Jaina learned community (*saṅgha*) established at Madurai during the late fifth century that provided not merely grammatical models to Tamil poets, but gnomic ones as well. *Ghaṭikā*-s and other institutions of high learning in the Tamil plain of this time and later attracted men from everywhere in the South Indian macro region, even those from distant Banavasi in northern Karnataka from whence Mayurvarman, founder of the Kadamba dynasty, came for education in Kanchi (Kāñcipuram). In this south-eastern coastal lowland, from the fifth century, a civilization developed whose social and cultural forms profoundly influenced people over a great portion of the southern peninsula. A substantial part of this influence was carried by people of the Tamil plain as the peasant agrarian system there expanded during the Chola period. In fact, the macro region is almost conterminous with the maximal extent of the Chola overlordship, and the provenance of Tamil language inscriptions of this period helps to define the macro region as much as other evidence. Thus, a part of the modern state of Karnataka — its heartland consisting of the modern districts of Mysore, Bangalore, and Kolar — once comprised an area of Tamil influence called Karmandalam, a name which persisted in Tamil usage long after the time when the territorial name Gangavadi replaced it among Kannada speakers. There were similar extensions of dominance by Tamil speakers — peasant settlers and warriors — northward over the Andhra plain to the

[10] Recent scholarship on this tradition includes: K. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1973; George L. Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamils*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975 and K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1968. David Ludden, in a personal communication, has pointed out that the exclusion of Kerala from the macro region defined here is scarcely justified during the Śaṅgam Ages since much of the poetry of the time was composed in Kerala. The point is certainly well taken for in this early period, however, except for Venadu (erstwhile Travancore State) most of the rest of Kerala has been as isolated from the interior peninsula as it was linked with parts of the Western littoral and the Arabian Sea from the tenth century A.D.

delta formed by the Kistna and Godavari rivers. Modern Nellore was within the overlordship of Rajaraja I and, under the last of the great Chola overlords, Kulottunga I, the Kistna-Godavari delta was firmly within the overlordship of the Cholas based in the Tamil plain. The scope of Chola authority — which will be discussed as 'ritual sovereignty' below — culminated a century of efforts by its rulers to incorporate within their overlordship the potentially rich Kistna-Godavari delta in which Tamil-speaking peasants had come to represent an important segment of the population. Along with this expansion of peasant peoples of the Tamil plain and the Chola overlordship into territories contiguous to the coastal lowland, including portions of modern Karnataka and Andhra as well as the uplands of modern Coimbatore and Salem, went many elements of culture and society. Such elements were transformed, of course, especially in interaction with Andhra and Karnataka cultures. These other Dravidian language cultures, though less ancient or refined in literary terms, and without a corpus of literature of classical antiquity such as existed in Tamil, underwent continuous development during the medieval age. Each of these South Indian cultural traditions so changed as to constitute distinctive subcultural variations, each substantially and, over time increasingly, different from the early Tamil culture of the plain proper. Even after these cultural traditions had emerged as mature after the thirteenth century, there were continued influences from the core of Tamil civilization in religion, for example, while a reverse flow of political power emanating now from the northern territories under the Vijayanagara overlords was carried by peasant warriors who were possibly, in many cases, descendants of the earlier migrants to the north. Such interactions between the core of Tamil civilization in the coastal plain with those territories which had been extensions of the plain produced a supracultural zone and contributed to the distinctive macro region and directly influenced the peasant society of South India.

Physical elements of the macro region are complex. The southern portion of the peninsula shares with the northern portion a peninsular configuration. Both parts of the peninsula are linked by the old and stable Deccan plateau formation comprising the core of the entire peninsula. The plateau has affected the pattern of settlement over much of the peninsula because, as a result of its

geomorphological character, fertile lands capable of supporting relatively dense populations were scattered and isolated nodes of prosperity and civilization surrounded by forest clad uplands capable of supporting small, and often predatory, populations. Spate's four 'perennial nuclear regions' of the 'Dravidian South' alerts one to this scatter configuration. However, within each of these four regions — Kalinga, Andhra, Chola, and Pandya countries — further sub-regions may be delineated consisting of small clusters of sedentary, advanced peoples amidst forest and hill peoples. Spatial relationships resulting from the pattern of isolated settlement and one other major factor — the significance of the sea — have critical historical importance for the macro region under discussion; these characteristics are shared by both portions of peninsular India (i.e. 'South India' and the Deccan) in contrast to most of the continental portions of the sub-continent.

Within 'South India' itself, the most important element relating to historical agrarian relations is the Coromandel plain on the eastern littoral, extending from the tip of the peninsula to the northern edge of the broad delta of the Godavari and Kistna rivers.[11] Never deeper than one hundred miles, in the Kaveri basin, this lowland is moulded into a complex structure by the rocky extensions of a broken range of low hills that parallel the coast, called the 'Eastern Ghats', and by patches of lateritic soils and rocky marine deposits. The Coromandel plain is traversed by streams draining these broken hill ranges as well as those of the more imposing highland blocks of the western side of the peninsula, the 'Western Ghats', including the Nilgiris in the north and the Annamalai, Palni, and Cardamom hills in the south. Peaks of this western highland attain an elevation of 8,000 feet. The most important streams are the Godavari, Kistna and Kaveri, each of which forms extensive, fertile deltas; other important rivers are the Penner (or North Penner), Palar, Ponnaiyar (or South Penner), Tambraparni, and Vaigai. The unfolding of this plain to its full contemporary extent, in agrarian terms, was gradual; it was not completed until the late nineteenth century when Kaveri canal

[11] Spate, op. Cit. chapters 24 and 25 contain a good discussion of the plain and its features; also see K. Ramamurthy, 'Some Aspects of the Regional Geography of Tamilnad', *Indian Geographical Journal*, v. 23, no. 2 (April-June, 1948), pp. 1-137; no. 3 (July-Sept., 1948), pp. 20-61; no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1948), pp. 23-33; v. 24, no. 2 (April-June, 1949), pp. 28-41; no. 3 (July-Sept., 1949), pp. 1-34.

irrigation brought the south-eastern corner of Tanjavur into irrigated cultivation. This phased opening of the Coromandel plain provides one of the important factors of agrarian periodization for South India, and the gradual settlement of the plain with sedentary peasant communities is as important in the historical development of the southern part of the sub-continent as the settlement of the Gangetic plain was in the northern part of the sub-continent. Both plains were prime *loci* of Indo-Aryan civilization; both were the prizes to be won by warriors and cultivators from near and far.

The full impact of the seaward boundary of the Coromandel plain is yet unclear in agrarian terms. However, the influence of the sea is very ancient and has led some scholars to speculate that the basic ethnic composition of the peninsula may have been just as influenced by overseas immigration as the continental portions of the sub-continent were by ancient overland migrations.[12] Further, the impressive maritime activities of the Pallavas and the Cholas were but continuations of the earlier Satavahana interest in overseas trade.[13] Maritime trade dating from the early years of the Christian era is dramatically, if incompletely, documented from mainland and insular South-east Asia.[14] The cultural impact of the Pallavas is monumentally preserved in the Cambodian

[12] Noted by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Cultural Expansion of India*, G.S. Press, Madras, 1959, pp. 66-7; I. Karve, 'India as a Cultural Region', in *Indian Anthropology*, T.N. Madan and Gopala Sarana (eds.), Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, pp. 328-35; and T.N. Subramaniam, *The Pallavas of Kanchi in South-East Asia*, Swadesamitran, Madras, 1967. Associated with this is the idea of 'Lemurian' or 'Gondavana' land forms which supposedly connected South India, Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and East Africa. *See* K.K. Pillay, *South India and Ceylon*, University of Madras, Madras, 1963, pp. 5-7.

[13] Classical and other references to this trade are found in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices of South India: From Megasthenes to Ma Huan*, University of Madras, Madras, 1939. A Satavahana coin depicts a two-masted ship as do some coins of the same period from further south. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of South Indian History*, Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1964, p. 63.

[14] Sastri, *Foreign Notices . . .*, R.C. Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonization in Southeast Asia*, M.S. University of Baroda, Baroda, 1955. Notice should also be taken of the growing critical literature of the 'Greater India' view of Indian scholars as expressed early in J.C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1955, pp. 91-104 and Paul Wheatley, 'Desultory Remarks on the Ancient History of the Malay Peninsula', in John Bastin (ed.), *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1964, pp. 41-3.

kingdom of Angkor,[15] and the military impact of Cholas in Sri Lanka and the Indonesian archipelago is documented in some lengthy and important inscriptions.[16] Whatever is made of the fragmentary facts of this early maritime interest and activity ultimately, and there is yet much for scholars to do, some of the more conspicuous manifestations of it may be suggested.

From an early time until perhaps the fourteenth century, the sea presented an opportunity for South Indians to trade and to pillage. Chinese records identify Kanchi (Conjeevaram, Chingleput District) as an important trade centre from perhaps as early as the second century B.C.[17] Other important entrepots on the Coromandel coast are mentioned in western classical sources; these include Kaveripatnam (Roman sources: Camara), Shiyali Taluk, Tanjavur; Puduchcheri (Pondicherry) (Rom.: Poduca); Markanam (Rom.: Sopatma), Tindivanam Taluk, South Arcot; and Machlipatnam (Rom.: Masalia). From these ports, South Indian merchants organized in guilds (e.g. *maṇigrāmattār*) sailed to the entrepots of the Kra Isthmus or directly to other South-east Asian ports with wares collected from throughout the southern peninsula of India. And to Coromandel ports came merchants from South-east Asia whose commercial and cultural activities, if the recent and persuasive research on early South-east Asian history is to be accepted, were largely responsible for many elements borrowed from South India.[18] Whatever historical assessment is made on the major directionality of influence and agents in the early trade and cultural relations between South India and South-east Asia, the existence of trade centres on the coast as well as in the interior certainly constituted points of a vast commercial network reaching ultimately to China.

This trade system tying South Indians to a wider world persisted

[15] Lawrence P. Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, v. 41, pt I, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1951.

[16] Pillay, *South India and Ceylon*, op. cit.; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The History of Srīvijaya*, University of Madras, Madras, 1949; George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, East-West Centre Press, Honolulu, 1968 (trans. Susan B. Cowing, ed. Walter F. Vella); George W. Spencer, 'The Politics of Plunder; the Cholas in Eleventh Century Ceylon', *J.A.S.*, v. 35 (May, 1976), pp. 405-19.

[17] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'The Beginning of Intercourse Between India and China', *Indian Historical Journal*, v. 14 (1938), p. 386.

[18] Van Leur, op. cit., and Wheatley, op. cit..

from the beginning of the Christian era to the fourteenth century when the character of South Indians' participation in it changed. Two developments contributed to this change. One was the deepening Muslim control over Indian Ocean trade which favoured the commercial ascendancy of Muslim traders from western India, by this time under greater control of Muslims. Coromandel Muslims, mostly converted Hindu traders, continued to participate in the Indian Ocean network, but the role of Coromandel diminished relatively after this time while that of western India grew.

Coupled with the extension of Muslim control over trade lanes between India and South-east Asia, and the diminished role of South Indian Hindus was the breakdown of the guild structure of trade in South India. From about the ninth century, wealthy and prestigious guildsmen, trading over extensive portions of the southern peninsula and beyond, were an important element within the existing agrarian system. Itinerant guilds provided one of the means by which the scattered, advanced agrarian communities of the period were linked together. Basic changes in South Indian society after the fourteenth century diminished the ability of itinerant guilds to maintain their former functions. These changes included vastly more powerful and larger-scale political units; both reduced guildsmen to a congeries of localized merchant groups in the internal trade while Muslim traders on the coast, better able to fit into the Muslim-dominated trade system of the Indian ocean, handled most of the external trade. Until the fourteenth century, therefore, overseas trade must be seen within the context of the South Indian agrarian system; after the fourteenth century, Coromandel trade and the general influence of the sea upon agrarian institutions was significantly diminished.[19]

The sea boundary of the South Indian macro region attained its greatest early politico-military significance during the Chola period. Then South Indian soldiers established temporary holds in Sri Lanka and beyond. Rajaraja Chola (A.D. 985-1014) and his son, Rajendra Chola (A.D. 1012-44) undertook these daring military expeditions. Rajaraja, according to a Tanjavur inscription of late in his reign, claimed conquests in many parts of South

[19] See author's 'Medieval Coromandel Trade', in *Merchants and Scholars*, ed. John Parker, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1965.

India as well as Sri Lanka (Ilamandalam) and the Maldives;[20] Rajendra in the Tanjavur inscription of his nineteenth regnal year, boasts of the same conquests as his father, and also his own, perhaps most daring, raids upon Kadaram (Kedah, modern Malaysia), the northern portion of the Srivijaya kingdom.[21] These expeditions are of interest in this discussion — whatever may be made of them in more general historical terms — because the composition of the Chola armies reflects something essential about the organization of contemporary society and because the probable purposes of such expeditions suggest something essential about the nature of Chola government and kingship. It is the latter point which is of some concern here.

For the Chola overlords, a prime objective was to extend their overlordship to the full extent of the Coromandel plain from their central position in it. In part, this was achieved through warfare and resulted in the recognition of Chola dominance by warriors of northern sections of the plain at the Kistna-Godavari delta, or the territory of Vengi, as well as the southernmost portion of the Tamilnadu plain, or Pandya country. But, this expansion of the Chola overlordship under Rajaraja and Rajendra from their core domain in the Kaveri basin to the entire Tamil plain and its adjacent upland was not achieved nor was it maintained by military means alone. Chola kings of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries were exemplars of medieval South Indian kingship and models of appropriate rulership for chiefs of the macro region; it was less the might of the Chola rulers than it was their moral appropriateness that provided the basis of Chola rule over the Coromandel plain.

Different from this extension of Coromandel authority over territories close to the Kaveri were the Chola actions as far afield as the Raichur Doab to the north-west, the Mahanadi basin in the north-east, Malaya, and Sri Lanka. These were pillaging raids meant to yield rich booty and nothing more permanent. Such

[20] India, Archaeological Survey of India, *South-Indian Inscriptions* [*S.I.I.*] (Madras, 1890) v. 2, pt 2, no. 65, 252-9; V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Selected South Indian Inscriptions* [*S.S.I.I.*], University of Madras, Madras, 1952, pp. 34-44. The same *prasasti* appears in other Rajaraja inscriptions of the period, viz., Ukkal (North Arcot District), *S.I.I.*., v. 3, pt 1, no. 4, 6-8, and Merpadi (North Arcot District), ibid., no. 15, 22-4.

[21] *S.S.I.*, v. 3, pt 1, no. 20, pp. 105-9 and *S.S.I.I.*, pp. 70-6.

far-ranging raids were a part of the pattern of Indian overlordship and a central aspect of Indian kingship. Where the realization of state revenue through an ordered administrative system was absent except in quite localized territories, Indian rulers, great and small, depended for a major portion of their income on raids upon neighbours or, in some cases, upon distant, rich, overlords. The Gupta king Samudragupta, of the fourth century, provided the classic template for such predatory expeditions; more modest versions were the cattle raids of contemporary hill peoples upon plains villages. Often rationalized by historians as logical expansions of territory, Chola raids, particularly those beyond the sea frontier, have a patently predatory purpose. Detailed knowledge about distant, small, rich, kingdoms, probably borne by contemporary venturesome Coromandel merchants, would have served to justify the risks of these undertakings. The sea thus provided the opportunity and the means to extend the region from which wealth could be extracted beyond the peninsula itself, and it may be suggested that the wealth won in such daring raids was utilized to widen the Chola power base in the central Coromandel region.[22]

The western or interior boundary of the Coromandel plain is more difficult to define, consisting as it does of a great variety of transitional physical situations. These range from slight modifications of the plain to sharp topographical breaks caused by upthrusting hills and ranges. In general, however, the western definition of the plain was marked by intrusions of the plateau formation. This ancient upland derives its agrarian significance not only in marking the edge of the coastal plain, but also in containing extensive cultivable land. However, tracts of such land are discontinuous owing to the deep cutting rivers and formidable rocky stratum bared by these rivers during their turbulent traverse to the plain. Also, upland ecotypes are hazardous: the rainfall regime there is adversely affected by the rain-shadow effect of the western bloc and the highly variable monsoonal effects upon the peninsular interior. Most parts of the interior are, however, within easy access of the plain at many points, and it is to the broad, fertile

[22] Note is taken of the important work of George W. Spencer on this question; see his Ph.D. thesis 'Royal Leadership and Imperial Conquest in Medieval South India: The Naval Expedition of Rajendra Chola I, *c.* A.D. 1025', Department of History, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

Coromandel plain that people of the upland have been oriented since the ninth century.

The 1,000 foot contour is a relevant indicator of agrarian potential north and west from near Kanya Kumari (Cape Camorin) to the Palghat Gap. West of this line, between 8°05′ and 10°30′ north latitude, rise the western highlands consisting of the Annamalai, Palni, and Cardamom mountains. North of the Palghat opening and the Ponnani river which drains this gap area to the west, loom the highest of the western bloc, the Nilgiris, which extend to 10°40′ north where they fall to the Mysore plateau at about 2,000 feet. North, beyond the Nilgiris, the 1,000 foot contour is deceptive as an indicator for it disguises important socio-cultural relationships. It obscures the extent to which the southern Mysore plateau at 2,000 feet and higher, and the Coimbatore plateau with its extension across the Kaveri into the portion of modern Salem south of the Shevroy Hills and the Toppur divide, at between 500 and 1,000 feet, have been linked to the Coromandel plain. Access to these uplands from the plain is attained with considerable ease in most places, but with difficulty in others where the gradient is steep and precarious.

Between the Coromandel plain and the bloc of highlands to the west, crested by the Nilgiri peak of Dodabetta at 8,000 feet, the tableland constitutes a secondary agrarian core of South India. The uplands of Coimbatore and southern Salem are ringed about by a series of broken hill ranges at between 2,000 and 4,000 feet — the Shevroy, Kollamalai, Pachamalai, Kalrayan, and Javadi — whose foothills mark portions of the western edge of the plain. Other hills which rise to 2,500 feet separate portions of these uplands from each other. The Baramahal, which constitutes modern northern Salem, is separated from its southern portion by difficultly traversed passes at 1,500 feet. Deeply cut river courses also divide the upland internally. The Kaveri has comprised a long-recognized internal boundary between southern Salem and Coimbatore; the Palar and Ponnaiyar too have also divided portions of the uplands. However, each of these major streams, besides providing focuses of significant population clusters, have served to connect the uplands with other, more densely settled tracts; the Kaveri with the southern Tamil plain, the Ponnaiyar with the northern Tamil plain. Modern Coimbatore town occupies a strategic place on the trans-peninsular axis of the Kaveri and Ponnani through the

Palghat gap thus constituting one of the tenuous links between the two coastal plains of the peninsula.

The Mysore plateau, though geomorphologically different from the Coimbatore and southern Salem uplands in being more closely linked to the core of the Deccan plateau formation, has historically been a continuation of these interior Tamil uplands connected with the Tamil plain. The agrarian heartland of the Mysore plateau has been the *maidan*, or 'open country', southward of the watershed which crosses Karnataka between thirteen and fourteen degrees north latitude. The Karnataka heartland has been connected with the Coimbatore and southern Salem uplands, and through these with the Coromandel plain by way of the Kaveri in the south and the Palar in the east.[23] North of the watershed, an irregular line running west from Hassan to Kolar, the Mysore plateau has long been an area of marginal population and agriculture constituting a transitional zone to the dry Bombay-Karnataka and the Deccan lavas of Maharashtra. Northern Salem, or the Baramahal, has, in effect, acted as a pivotal tract connecting the eastern portion of the Karnataka *maidan* with the Coimbatore plateau on the south, and the coastal plain in the east.

The entire upland complex of Coimbatore, southern Salem, northern Salem, and southern Karnataka not only share general topographic characteristics, in contradistinction to the plain, but climatic ones as well. It is a dry area with a rainfall pattern variable in quantity and timing. The range of precipitation is between about twenty-seven and thirty-five inches in a pattern resembling neither the classic monsoon of the west coast nor the so-called 'retreating South-west monsoon' of the coastal plain in the east. Some parts of this upland are subject to high unreliability of rainfall such as most of Coimbatore district where unreliability exceeds thirty-five per cent.[24]

The northern boundary of the coastal plain does not end abruptly at the rough hills which mark the northern edge of the Godavari trough. Skirting the coast at this point is an important routeway which the British called the 'Northern Circars' including, in addition to the deltaic districts, the modern districts of Vishakapatnam

[23] B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore: A Gazetteer Compiled for Government (Rev. Ed.)*, v. 1, London, 1897, pp. 4-5.

[24] *Government of India*, vol. IX, 'Madras', pt IX, 'Atlas of the Madras State', Madras, 1964, map no. 8; 'Rainfall Reliability, 1911-1960'.

and Srikakulam and those of Ganjam and Puri. This attenuated extension of the Coromandel lowland, properly the Andhra plain, constituted a channel through which trade and people moved from the eastern portion of the primary core of Indian civilization, the Gangetic plain, to the second such core in the south-eastern peninsula. There is also some evidence of a reverse flow of religious influence and interaction from the Tamil plain to Orissa as in the A.D. 1396 stone inscription from Bhubaneshwar recording a gift of land to the Siddhesvaramatha to support ascetics from Chola, Pandya, and Kanchi country.[25] Moreover, there were times, brief to be sure, when this northern portion of the Coromandel plain figured prominently in the affairs of the peninsula south of the Godavari-Kistna delta region.[26]

The appropriateness of including portions of the Andhra and Orissa coastal plains in the macro region designated as 'South India' presupposes non-physical criteria. These should be made explicit. There are two such criteria which serve to delineate the macro region being considered here. One consists of a set of interrelated political, cultural, and social elements which differentiate the region from others in the sphere of Indian culture. The other criterion is interactional, that is, the recognition of a qualitatively different order of interrelations among parts of the macro region than between any part of the macro region and places beyond it.

The medieval South Indian political system was based upon states which were 'segmentary'. In this sense it cannot be differentiated from the political system of most of the sub-continent at the time. Localized political units were capable of being linked,

[25] Madras, Archaeological Department, Southern Circle, *Annual Report on Epigraphy* [*A.R.E.*] *1955-1956*, p. 8 and no.117 relate to an A.D. 1396 bilingual inscription, Oriya and Tamil. Full text of this: India, Archaeological Survey of India, *Epigraphia Indica* [*E.I.*,] v. 32, no. 6 (April 1958), 229ff.

[26] Rajaraja I according to an inscription at Tirukkovalur in A.D. 1012 claimed the title of 'Gajapati' by which the overlords of Kalinga were known, indicating a successful expedition against Orissa; see T.N. Subramaniam, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions* [*S.I.T.I.*] Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, Madras Government Oriental Series, no. 157, 1957, v. 3, pt 2, 14-15. During the Vijayanagara period, Krishnadevaraya struck at the Gajapatis along the same corridor, wresting all of the delta south of the Kistna in 1512; see S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, v. 2, Poona Oriental Series, no. 74, Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 1941, pp. 136-9.

loosely and symbolically, to kings whose sovereignty might for a time be recognized by local chieftains. Kings whose overlordships were so recognized were in all cases effectively in control of but a small portion of the macro region, but the legitimacy of their hegemonic claims — which were ceremonial rather than real in any case — could be recognized by those far-removed from this core of real power. What was insisted upon by those who extended recognition to an overlord was a style of dharmic kingship. South Indian kings and dynasties of the medieval age, beyond the localities of their own power, were symbols of authority and legitimacy for a vast number of chieftains throughout the macro region. It did not matter that Chola rulers, for example, were Tamilians for their sovereignty to be recognized among Kannada-speaking or Telugu-speaking chiefs. Nor was it important that the Hoysala or Vijayanagara kings were not Tamils for their authority to be accepted by local chiefs in Tamil country as attested by numerous inscriptions. It mattered only that the idea of legitimate secular authority, as symbolized in the concept of kingship, exist for the system of localized, segmentary political units to function as part of a kingdom.

These characteristics of kingship have considerable antiquity. From the Classical Tamil literature of seven hundred years before the great Cholas, three kingships were recognized and, during the medieval period, references continue to be made to the 'three kings' (*mū-vēndar*)[27] in the titles of prominent men, *mū-venda-vēḷār*. Then, and even earlier, in the time of Ashoka, the three kingships were called: 'Chola, Chera [or Kerala] and Pandya.'[28] While there is some question about the location of Chera kingship[29] it would appear to be what is now southern Kerala or, somewhat earlier, Travancore State. In medieval times, this area was called *vēnāḍu*. Another possibility considered by some, including Arokiaswami, and rejected, is that Chera kingship had its *locus* in the upper Kaveri basin, modern southern Karnataka and northern Coimbatore. These kingships of Tamil antiquity do little more than

[27] [*Tamil Lexicon*], (University of Madras, Madras, 1936) v. 6, p. 3332, *mū-vēntar*.

[28] Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, OUP, Oxford, 1961, pp. 251, 255-6.

[29] M. Arokiaswami, *The Kongu Country*, University of Madras, Madras, 1956, pp. 3-12.

recognize the principle of monarchy. It is only with the later Pallavas and especially the Cholas that the medieval institution of kingship is established, and this is a monarchical form which does not vary whether the state is avowedly Hindu, as in the case of the Pallavas and the Cholas, or Jain, as in the case of the Gangas and early Hoysalas of southern Karnataka.

The character of the South Indian medieval state as a form of 'segmentary' state is dealt with in chapter VII. For purposes of delineating the macro region, it is sufficient to propose that this form of state is perhaps best exemplified by the Chola state of Rajaraja the Great and his son, Rajendra, in reigns covering the period from A.D. 985 to about 1045.[30] This and other South Indian states of the medieval period were integrated primarily by the symbolic or ritual sovereignty which attached to the king, not by the effective power possessed by him. In a polity where coercive means, or military capability, was not monopolized by the kingly centre, but possessed by every peripheral, local unit in greater or lesser measure, there could be no centralized monarchy in terms of real power. However, these many localities and locally powerful men were linked to kings in Tanjavur in their recognition of the ritual sovereignty acknowledged in the tens of thousands of stone and metal inscriptions which have been discovered in the macro region. These inscriptions do more than tell us about ritual sovereignty; they are crucial component elements of that sovereignty.

Inscriptions exist everywhere in the Indian cultural sphere, of course. However, in no other parts of India, except perhaps Bengal during the medieval period, do they appear to have constituted the expressive linkage mechanism of ritual sovereignty as they do in medieval South India. Moreover, whatever the difficulties of using inscriptional evidence,[31] part of their great value is that they can be located in time and space with considerable precision. Most inscriptions are documents recording gifts (*dāna-śāsana*) to Brahmans or temples from wealthy and powerful persons of groups of a locality. Yet, such documents often have an introduction, frequently in Sanskrit, referring to the reigning king, his genealogy, conquests, and dharmic rule. This introduction adds nothing to the gift document which, in the case of most

[30] For a discussion of the final years of Rājēndra, see Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, University of Madras, Madras, 1955, p. 221.

[31] D. C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 23-30.

copperplates is usually in another local language. The introduction or *praśasti*, is all-important, however, as a statement of homage to a great king by those locally prominent persons who instituted such gifts. Under Rajaraja I, Chola *praśastis* were standardized, kept current on an almost annual basis, and even provided with an identifying label of a few words, *meykīrtti*, which could be used in place of the full introductory portion of a grant. Here, then, was a powerful symbolic medium used in the political system. Inscriptions called upon the skills of literate and erudite men and expressed the symbols by which the particularistic loyalties, interests, and affiliations of powerful local persons were merged as a segmentary state within a spatial zone of legitimate overlordship.

A more widely recognized distinctive feature of medieval South Indian states was the primacy of assemblies of all kinds in the governance of the numerous localized societies of contemporary South India.[32] It was an assembly of some sort which most consistently articulated and took responsibility for the decisions to allocate agrarian resources to various purposes, at least from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. With regard to agrarian resources, the polity was less one of regal, or Kshatriya raj, than one of assembly, or *sabhā* raj.

The political structure in the South Indian macro region was distinctive by the almost total absence of the Kshatriya institution. Sastric norms related to formal political authority and, to a significant extent, to the actual practices followed in many parts of northern India were predicated upon the existence of a warrior class which enjoyed high ritual status, its marriage and descent rules resulted in broad territorial groupings of warrior lineages, and who possessed a monopoly of coercive competence beyond that of individual ethnic units (castes or tribes) and other corporate entities such as village communities, guilds, and religious bodies. Kshatriya institutions, variable though they were over northern India, represented a warrior élite whose authority was maintained through extensive agnatic and affinal relationships and whose primary function was that of ruling a small territory, a domain which at times could be expanded by warfare into a large realm under able military leadership or could be reduced by succumbing to the expanding overlordship of some other regal lineage. Rarely

[32] Noted by A. S. Altekar, among others, in *A History of Village Communities in Western India*, OUP, Madras, 1927.

was this system of political organization capable of being moulded into a great kingdom covering even a portion of the Gangetic plain and then only under the quite extraordinary military capabilities of a Samudragupta or a Harsha. The normal political condition in northern India during ancient and medieval times was its division into a great number of small territories under kin-linked, warrior families of high status. Such was the nature of Kshatriya raj.

The macro region of southern India was without such high status warrior groups, and it would be difficult to reconcile such a pattern of authority with two of the salient social structural characteristics of the macro region: Brahman secular authority and the narrow territorial segmentation of social relationships and loyalty.

Only in Kerala did there emerge warrior lineages whose rule over relatively large territorial units persisted through substantial periods. It is important to note that these warriors never lost their identity as 'Nayars', the bulk of whom were regarded by Brahmans at least as Sudras. Nayar 'Kshatriyahood' has thus been a case of enriched Sudra status. However modest an accomplishment, the investment of sections of the dominant non-Brahman population with durable Kshatriya status was not replicated in other parts of the southern peninsula except in very remote and miniscule hill tracts. This is an important reason for excluding Kerala from the macro region.

The exclusion of Kerala from the macro region on this, or on any, basis may appear unjustified; it would appear to present the regional argument in a weak form even though it does serve to emphasize an important discontinuity within the Indian cultural sphere. To state this politically distinctive factor in more positive terms, within the macro region the most persistent feature of political organization was the alliance between sections of Brahmans and representatives of the dominant land-controlling population of Sudra rank. This constituted a political arrangement consistent with and contingent upon the high secular authority of Brahmans acting corporately as assemblies (*sabhā*s) and an arrangement basically different from that of northern India where Kshatriya rule existed. In the latter case, power relations and conflict were the exclusive concern of recognized warrior lineages struggling for dominance among themselves within a territory or coping with

the armed intrusion of warriors from neighbouring territories. The crucial element for victory, apart from individual military ability, was the capacity of a warrior leader to mobilize a large contingent of armed kinsmen and their retainers to defend against or to aggress upon a neighbour. In the South Indian macro region during the earliest period surveyed here, the political context was also confined to a small territory in which Brahmans and high *(sātvik)* non-Brahmans shared authority over the population of lower caste people, whose major political function it was to dispose of the corporate interests expressed by various kinds of groups in formal assemblies.

The political culture of the macro region until the fourteenth century would have permitted no other dominant political arrangement than that of *sabhā* rāj. Large and populous villages of the macro region provided an efficient and legitimate means of governing the affairs of diverse social groups through assemblies whose entire constituencies inhabited a single territorial unit. The territorially segmented structure of social relationships among numerous social fragments and the absence of Kshatriyas form the basic determinants of the region's political organization.

Rule through assemblies may have been inherently more peaceful than Kshatriya-dominated areas elsewhere, but violence and warfare occurred. Defence against hill and forest people was a regular problem in this period and later, and predatory wars against neighbours did occur along with daring pillaging expeditions far from the region itself. The great Brihadesvara temple of Rajaraja I in Tanjavur, for example, was constructed and maintained through demands by Rajaraja upon villages throughout the Kaveri delta core of Chola power as well as from 'the booty in the conquests of Chēra and Pāṇḍya kings. . .' and the Chalukya king Satyasraya as described in the 'Larger Leiden Plates' of Rajaraja.[33] Such warfare tended to enhance the prestige of a few warriors, and this was an important secondary objective of the activity, but it also brought fame and fortune to the corporate groups who made up the armies led by such warriors — soldiers of the left and right divisions of castes, certain artisan groups, guilds — thus it strengthened the vigorous corporate structure of South Indian political relations until at least the fourteenth century.

[33] *E.I.*, v. 22, no. 34.

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, the political structure of the macro region was altered by the introduction of a new order of warrior control in all of its parts. Warriors from the northern fringe portions of the macro region established themselves in many parts of the southern portions and, where these 'northern men' (*vaḍugan*) did not establish their control, there arose locality leaders from within to end the era of *sabhā* rāj. Yet, the warriors who came to dominate territories previously under the control of the assemblies of Brahmans and other corporate groups in South Indian society did not establish themselves as Kshatriyas whom they may superficially have resembled. While destroying the system of corporate assemblies, the new warrior élite preserved the older Brahman-*sāt*-Sudra alliance. The latter groups provided a ready pool of collaborators with the new order, and they were rewarded by enhanced functions as village and locality leaders. As for Brahmans, the new warrior élite of South India sought and obtained a required moral standing or legitimacy in return for support of new sacred temple centres of Brahmanical authority. For all of their considerable efforts however, most new warriors failed to establish either durable or extensive networks of kinship and stability within the social structure of the macro region. Kaḷḷar and Maṟavar rulers of many parts of the southern peninsula and Tanjavur were exceptional in this respect, but their political networks conformed to pre-existing clan-like control of many of these parts of South India. However, neither achieved high ritual status, though they often claimed high non-Brahman (i.e. Vellala) rank.

When the British extended their territorial power in the south during the eighteenth century, this shallow-rooted warrior élite was found not to constitute a landed class through which Company objectives of stability, peace, and tribute could be realized. Called 'poligar' by the British (Tamil: *pāḷaiyakkārar*, or 'men of military encampments') these warriors had not developed the client relationships of, say the Oudh talukdars or that group of landed agents who were called 'zamindars' in Bengal; they had failed to create for themselves an integrated place within the social structure of the south essential for the intermediary functions which the British required. In the face of British expansion, 'poligars' could only fight to retain their unstable overlordships and thereby risk annihilation, or they could forego their prized positions and accept

the uncertain status of village renter or later, zamindar under the Company. Many warriors chose the former, and the late eighteenth century witnessed the liquidation of this class of low caste military leaders which had failed to alter the earlier structure of society sufficiently to provide viable places for themselves during the course of four centuries when they had power. The Brahman – high non-Brahman alliance thus remained intact to almost 1800.

Perhaps, as in none of the mature sub-cultures of the Indian sub-continent in medieval times, the Sanskrit language and ideas derived from its texts were balanced by non-Sanskritic cultural elements in South India. Social, religious, and political categories from Sanskrit śāstras and *purāṇa*s were utilized in the inscriptional and literary sources of the age, often when these categories had little sociological, ritual, and doctrinal, or political reality. However, in the macro region under study here, and especially among the Tamils, there was a prominent place given to the languages, symbols and usages of the indigenous, Dravidian cultures as well. To state the matter in this way is to suggest two independent traditions — Sanskrit and Dravidian — which is a false conception, for even in classical Tamil literature the two are so inextricably interwoven as to defy disaggregation into autochthonous, interacting phenomena. Yet, an effort was made to preserve some degree of formal independence of the two traditions as shown in the bi- and sometimes tri-lingual inscriptions of the medieval period and the tendency in inscriptions — the major public documents of the time — to use Sanskritic and Dravidian language forms.

Related to this balance of Sanskritic and Dravidian elements was the place of Brahmans as the major cultural arbiters of the culture of the macro region. The high visibility of Brahmans in their distinctive settlements (*brahmadeya*s) over much of the Tamil and Andhra plains, in their religious and instructional roles, and in the significant political duties they carried out, are noted immediately below and elsewhere in this study. What may be emphasized at this point is that the cultural role of Brahmans in the medieval South as here delineated is not that of an exogenous influence upon essentially Dravidian societies of Tamilians, Kannadigas, or Telugus. Brahmans were as integral to these respective traditions as were non-Brahmans. As prime custodians of Sanskrit knowledge, they are easily identifiable, of course, but it is important to recognize that Brahmans as learned indivi-

duals perhaps most perfectly incorporated the balance of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic elements which are given saliency here.

Brahmans were not alone in this ability, however. It becomes increasingly clear that from among the dominant non-Brahman peoples of Tamil country at least there were an impressive number at any time who were adept in Sanskrit learning as well as, with Brahmans, custodians and transmitters of non-Sanskritic cultural forms. And, while the evidence of tension between Brahman and non-Brahman savants and religious teachers becomes manifest in the thirteenth century, and lays the foundation for some of the conflict between the two in the twentieth century, the tension is not that between maintainers of an indigenous culture against external intruders, but largely that of cultural variants and their upholders seeking the greatest favour from those in a position to support them.

There are, finally, social forms which give distinctiveness to the macro region designated as South India here. While sastric models of Indo-Aryan society are in no part of India perfectly realized, historically or at present, the social structure of the South Indian macro region has long provided a unique and persistent variant of Indian society.

The uniqueness of this variant of Indian social structure is based upon three persistent and related characteristics: the great secular authority and significant secular functions of South Indian Brahmans; the dual division of lower social groups; and the territorial segmentation of all social hierarchies in the South Indian macro region.[34]

Brahman secular authority over the entire period of this study appears to stem from two conditions in South Indian society. Brahmans were strongly entrenched in the localities where they lived as a result of the prestige which attached to their sacerdotal functions, and this prestige was backed in many places by the power which they possessed by virtue of their direct control over land and those dependent upon land. In the matter of prestige associated with sacral functions, South Indian Brahmans did not differ from priests in most other parts of India. This is strongly suggested by caste ranking in all parts of the sub-continent. There is no reason to suppose that the high rank ubiquitously enjoyed by

[34] Marriott, *Caste Ranking* . . . , pp. 45-53, notes these factors as does Karve, op. cit.

priestly castes during the last century, when data for reasonably reliable ranking has been available, was different in earlier times.

However, in respect to Brahman locality power associated with land control, South India appears quite unique. In no other portions of the sub-continent did elaborate and powerful Brahman villages, *brahmadeya*s, exist as they did in the Coromandel and in many parts of the contiguous tableland during the period.[35] Similarly, in no other parts of the Indian cultural sphere were there so many Vedic temples with substantial control over endowed villages, *dēvadāna*, as in South India from about the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century. South Indian temples of the medieval period were unique in the degree to which they provided the means for Brahman temple functionaries to exercise not only ritual primacy over all other castes and religious institutions, but also in that temples were the headquarters of *bhakti* sects through which organizations the religious allegiances and ritual activities of most Hindus were ordered. The relatively comprehensive ritual, social, and agrarian functions of medieval South Indian temples resulted from many factors.

As compared with Hindu temples elsewhere in India during this period, the fact of being outside of the control of Muslim power, and possibly reacting to the threats of that power, was very important. However, ritual developments within *bhakti* Hinduism were an equally important reason for their flourishing condition in South India. As custodians of these religious centres, Brahmans were in a position to enjoy great secular authority, compensating, to some degree, for the contemporary decline in influence of Brahman villages under the altered political conditions of the fourteenth century and after. Finally, the early period of British rule in South India provided opportunities for the maintenance of powerful secular positions by Brahmans. As beneficiaries of early British land policies in South India, Brahmans were invested with proprietory rights over some of the richest, best irrigated lands in the presidency of Madras. Simultaneously, Brahmans became the most dependable servants of British officials in both collectorate and provincial offices of the Presidency. In these ways they were able to protect their ancient secular authority and, in some ways, even to enhance it by the early nineteenth century. Brahman

[35] This point is stressed by Altekar, *Village Communities in Western India.*

secular authority was not uniform throughout the macro region; it was greater in places like Tanjavur than in Salem and Coimbatore. But, in contrast to the secular authority and functions of Brahmans elsewhere, it is a most striking phenomenon in South India.

The second persistent characteristic of the social structure of the South Indian macro region was the bifurcation of lower social groups. The terms for this dual division of lower castes are not consistent over the macro region, being referred to by the right and left hand designations among Tamil and Kannada speakers and by these, as well as by sect designations (Vaishnavas corresponding to the right-hand division and Saivites corresponding to the left-hand castes elsewhere). Nor is the composition of this fundamental division easily specifiable because of variations in time and place.[36] However, in most cases the right-hand castes (Vaishnavas among lower Telugu castes) are associated primarily with agricultural production and local trade in agricultural commodities while left-hand castes are associated with mobile artisan production and relatively extensive trade in non-agricultural commodities.[37] These divisions of lower castes appear to operate as supra-local systems of alliance from which are excluded the two other, and most powerful, social strata of South Indian society, Brahmans and high non-Brahman castes.

For at least the last five hundred years it has been possible to identify a tripartite horizontal division of all South Indian castes in most parts of the macro region. These are Brahmans, respectable agricultural castes of acknowledged high ritual rank, and lower castes, the last group of castes being divided into the bifurcated

[36] Marriott, in *Caste Ranking* . . . , uses the term 'faction' most often in his discussion of this structural characteristic, and only rarely the term 'alliance' as on p. 51. An excellent, recent reconsideration of the matter is found in Arjun Appadurai, 'Right and Left Hand Castes in South India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, v. 11, nos. 2 and 3 (1974), pp. 216-60.

[37] This is supported from a wide range of evidence: C.S. Srinivasachari, 'The Origin of the Right and Left Hand Caste Divisions', *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, IV (1929), pp. 77-85; J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual*, Asylum Press, Madras, 1888, pp. 4-7; N. Subbha Reddi, 'Community Conflict Among the Depressed Classes of Andhra', *Man in India*, v. 30, no. 4 (1950), pp. 1-12; Government of Madras, *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, 1796*, 16, 20 and 27 June; 14 and 18 July; 4, 8, 22, and 25 August. *Manual of Administration of the Madras Presidency*, v. 3, 'Glossary', Government Press, Madras, 1893, pp. 1036-7.

groupings. Prior to the fifteenth century, and possibly as early as the eleventh century, the dual division of lower castes was an important factor in South Indian society, but the deeply competitive and conflict-ridden nature of relations between the two divisions of the Vijayanagara period and later appears to have been largely absent. Why and under what conditions the change from the relatively peaceful and integrated relations of the earliest period to the violent and competitive relations occurred is discussed below. But, whether peaceful or violent, the dual division of lower castes is a distinctive marker of the caste organization of the macro region.

Territorial segmentation of society and culture in the South Indian macro region is the third characteristic of social structure, the distribution of which contributes to its definition as a region. This characteristic relates to the marked extent to which social groups have tended to maintain a low order of significant and persistent relationships with groups at any substantial distance from their locality as compared to the often extensive network of group relations maintained in other parts of the sub-continent. Locality loyalties and parochial relationships of all kinds are attributes of peasant society and culture to which the Indian cultural sphere is not excepted. However, marriage and descent systems in South India operate in quite narrow territorial arenas. This is related to the preference for cross-cousin marriage and maternal uncle-niece marriage within narrow marriage 'kindreds' as well as to the tendency for village and village clusters to be more populous in South India than elsewhere. Also related to the territorial segmental feature is the precocious development of locality institutions by the Pallava period which provided the institutional framework through which the numerous nuclear territories of the Coromandel lowland functioned.

Territorially differentiated units of culture and society are deeply imbedded in the earliest Dravidian culture of the Classical period. According to one of the Classical works of this early period of Tamil literature, possibly the third century A.D., social groups in Tamil country were divided into five situational types on the basis of natural sub-region and related occupational patterns. The *Pattupāṭṭu* enumerates these territorial segments (or *tiṇai*) as follows:

1. *Maruta makkaḷ* or tribes of ploughmen (*uḻavar*) inhabiting fertile, well-watered tracts (*paṇai*) and living in villages called *ūr*;
2. *Kuṟavar makkaḷ* or hill people who are foresters, make charms, and tell fortunes and may come out of the forest to work in the *paṇai*;
3. *Mullai makkaḷ* or pastoralists, also called *ayār* (cowmen), *kōvalar* (shepherds), and *iḍaiyar* (cowherd or shepherd);
4. *Neytal makkaḷ* or fishing people living in large coastal villages called *paṭṭiṇam* or small ones called *pākkam*; and
5. *Pālai makkaḷ* or people of the dry plains called *eyiṉar*, *maṟavar*, and *vēḍar* who are hunters of both the dry plains and the forest.[38]

This five-fold division of ancient Tamil speakers is interesting for a variety of reasons. As a richly elaborated poetic scheme, it provides a pool of images which gives these poems much of their expressive power. Beyond that, as a description of spatial categories of Tamil subcultures they are important cultural concepts. Finally, these categories suggest a ranking postulate comparable to the varna concept elsewhere in the Indian cultural sphere. It is clear from Classical literature that the people of the first category, those of the *paṇai* who lived by the plough enjoyed a special place in the affection of the greatest Classical poets who were, for the most part, men of the 'thriving soil' of the *paṇai*.[39] It is easy, of course, to make too much of this element of 'ancient' Tamil culture. For one reason, the chronology of the literature containing these cultural categories is still controversial, with one group of scholars favouring the period from the sixth to ninth century and another larger group favouring the earlier period.[40] Also, the relationships between the

[38] S. Vithianathan, 'The *Pattupattu:* A Historical, Social, and Linguistic Study', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, July 1950. These terms have been examined by numerous scholars: see V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Higginbotham & Co., Madras, 1904; Srinivasa Iyengar, op. cit.; N. Subrahmaniam, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, University of Madras, Madras, 1966 and his *Śaṅgam Polity*, Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1966.

[39] Vithianathan, op. cit., p. 140. That Sangam poets were in most cases men of the *paṇai* is suggested in the authenticated or putative authors, compilers, and patrons of the anthologies as provided in Subrahmaniam, *Pre-Pallavan Index*, pp. 1-16.

[40] Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of Indian History*, pp. 54-7; Zvelebil, *Smile of Murugan*, ch. 3, pp. 23ff.

culture of a people, as reflected in a body of poetry collected and selected as anthologies centuries after being composed, and actual social patterns may be easily distorted.

These political, cultural, and social attributes and their discontinuous distribution over the southern peninsula permit the delineation of an historically significant macro region. However, there is another criterion which is important, an interactional or transactional one.

It is proposed that a portion of the southern peninsula may be demarcated on the basis of persistent and important interrelationships over most of the medieval period. In political, cultural, and social terms all of Tamil country and the southern parts of Karnataka and Andhra may be seen as bound together by the movement of peoples of all kinds — from Brahmans to the most vulnerable of landless folk — cult practices, and shifting patterns of overlordship. The outcome of these diverse interactions was a region which, while complex in language, some aspects of social structure, and cultural forms, was a uniformity which sets it off from other, physically contiguous territories. It is moreover clear from these historical interactions that the Kaveri basin — the seat of Chola power — constituted a core to which most of the southern people of the Indian cultural sphere looked for sources of political, cultural, and social developments in their own, often distant, homelands. Finally, the boundaries of the macro region which found the Kaveri as its prime locus are conveniently demarcated by the Chola overlordship in the time of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I. At the zenith of Chola power, that part of the southern peninsula which fell under the Chola overlordship *was* the macro region. This should not be understood to mean that the macro region was created by Chola conquest, but rather the opposite. The extensive overlordship claimed by the great Chola rulers and validated by hundreds of inscriptions of the time of these rulers was made possible in large part by the broad agreement about the legitimacy of certain symbolic relationships. The Chola king was a ritual centre, a political, cultural, and social reference point for the organization of medieval South Indian society.

Using the attributional and interactional markers discussed above, it is possible to delimit the macro region of 'South India' as understood here from other parts of the southern peninsula. Specifically, this study will not deal with what is now most of the

state of Kerala, nor with Telingana, nor with the northern portion of what is now Karnataka state or what the British called 'the Bombay-Karnatak'.

The west coast of the southern peninsula has long constituted a special problem for scholars of South India. Its isolation behind the high scarp of the Western Ghats has resulted in well-recognized discontinuities with respect to its social structure, its culture, and its settlement patterns.[41] Yet, however unique it may be — even considering the diversity of India — its society and culture possess elements of Dravidian India, and it cannot be summarily dismissed. Two factors weigh heavily in excluding most of the west coast of the peninsula from the macro region under study here. First, though modern and medieval Kerala is a part of the general South Indian cultural sphere, its interactions with the Coromandel lowland and with interior uplands of modern Coimbatore and Salem as well as with southern Karnataka have been of a low order and sporadic. Physical separation has never been overcome except in the case of the Venadu tract of the extreme south which was in continuous and close contact with other parts of the macro region.[42] The second factor is that the historical evidence of this isolated portion of the peninsula is too meagre and insufficiently synthesized at this time to permit analysis of its peculiar agrarian characteristics for any time before the nineteenth century.

Exclusion of Telingana is based upon similar considerations.

[41] Karve, op. cit., p. 252, states, '. . . Kerala represents a land of isolation where ancient customs have been preserved and where immigrants soon lost contact with their homelands and made strange adaptations to the customs of the native population, thus themselves adding to the peculiarities of the land'. Dr Joan P. Mencher makes the same point in terms of settlement and ecological factors in her 'Kerala and Madras: A Comparative Study of Ecology and Social Structure', *Ethnology*, V, no. 2 (April 1966), pp. 135-71.

[42] This seems very clear from the work of T. K. Velu Pillai (*The Travencore State Manual, Vol. II, History*, Government of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1940, pp. 50-118) when discussing the period from the ninth century to the time of Ravi Varma Kulasekhara in the early fourteenth century. It is also clear from the case of the important Venadu (southern Travancore) Saivite temple of Sucindram where Tamil Brahmans maintained control through their control over the village assembly of the place until the fourteenth century when they were replaced by Nambudris; moreover there was no state interference with the operations of the temple until the middle of the sixteenth century. See K. K. Pillay, *The Sucīndram Temple*, Kalaskshetra Publication (Adyar), Madras, 1953, pp. 153, 167.

This tract between the relatively fertile trappan lands of the Bombay-Karnatak, seat of the ancient power of the Chalukyas and Yadavas, and the rich deltaic lands of Vengi provided such a poor basis for settlement of agricultural peoples that it was not until the middle of the twelfth century that something like an organized state emerges from the confusion of warring minor chiefs.[43] This state, when it does come into existence is a doubtful version of the segmentary state system of other parts of the macro region. The Kakatiya kingdom of Telingana was not an operative state except for the late part of the reign of Ganapatideva (A.D. 1199-1261) when the congeries of previously independent minor chiefs of the area recognized the overlordship, or the ritual sovereignty, of this king. It appears quite certain from the records of the period that without the vigorous military activities of Ganapatideva even this brief period of overlordship could not have been achieved. Thus the Kakatiya 'kingdom' existed as a recognized polity for too brief a time before the Muslim conquest in the fourteenth century to inspire confidence that it was really a 'state' at all. A final reservation about the inclusion of Telingana is that the inscriptional evidence pertaining to the 'kingdom' shows little of the balance of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic elements characteristic of the inscriptional records of other states of the southern peninsula. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Sanskrit forms are dominant in the glimpses we are permitted of this area; there is no evidence of self-conscious Telugu culture as one finds contemporaneously in the neighbouring Vengi region. In time, a balance of Sanskritic and Telugu elements does emerge, even through the veneer of Muslim forms, but the process is a slow one. Telingana, in short, was a shatter region during almost all of the medieval period; it serves to mark one of the boundaries of the macro region of medieval South India.[44]

Reservations about the inclusion of what during the British period was called 'Bombay-Karnatak' are based upon attributional and interactional factors. What are now the Karnataka districts of Bidar, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Belgaum, Raichur, and parts of Dharwar and Bellary were in medieval times linked to the Deccan

[43] N. Ramesan, *Copper Plate Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh Government Museum, Hyderabad*, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1962, v. 1, p. 96.

[44] N. Venkataramanayya and M. Somasekharasarma, 'The Kākatīyas of Warangal' *in* Yazdani, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 575ff.

cultural sphere rather than South India. Kannada is, to be sure, a Dravidian language on the basis of which the districts mentioned above were joined with the princely state of Mysore in 1956.[45] However, there is a well-recognized and major dialectical break between northern and southern Kannada districts, the 'Dharwar' and 'Mysore' dialects respectively.[46] The dialectical isopleth is said to lie along the Tungabhadra River, but that is an imprecise designation.

This dialect division conforms to a basic division of the Mysore plateau by a watershed 'Crossbelt' which traverses the entire Karnatak area and divides the drainage basin of the Kistna system to the north and that of the Kaveri to the south.[47] A ridge line runs irregularly across that portion of modern Karnataka state below the Tungabhadra, beginning at around 12°30′ north latitude near the 76 degree meridian and extending to about 78 degrees where it merges with a complex river system formed by the northern and southern Penner and the Palar rivers. North of this ridge line, the drainage is northerly toward the Kistna; south of the line, the drainage is to the Kaveri, and this area constitutes the upper Kaveri basin. The eastern extension of this divide merges with the riverine systems of the Tamil plain.[48]

The dialectical variation of Kannada follows this topographical division and so do other important cultural elements. In the introductory chapter on cultural geography in Ananthakrishna Iyer's *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, these cultural discontinuities are noted and roughly mapped. They include: the incidence of Tamil inscriptions,[49] the distribution of Vira Saivite sectarians,[50] and the distribution of the most numerous castes of Karnataka.[51]

[45] Spate, op. cit. p. 645, cites the 1931 Census to report that Kannada speakers on a district basis were: Mysore district, 93%; Hassan, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Charwar, Bijapur, and Bangalore, 75-90%; Chitaldrug and Raichur, 72% and 64% respectively; and Bellary and Gulbarga, 49%.

[46] W.C. McCormack, *Kannada: A Cultural Introduction to the Spoken Styles of the Language*, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1966, p. 3.

[47] L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, Mysore University, Mysore, 1928-35, v. 1, p. 84 and map on p. 80; Rice, *Mysore: A Gazetteer Compiled for Government*, pp.4-5.

[48] Ibid., ch. 2, pp. 81ff.

[49] Ibid., p. 115, Fig. 8.

[50] Ibid., p. 120, Fig. 12.

[51] Ibid., pp. 123-4, 126; Figs. 17-20, 21, 23, 24, 27-32.

That these cultural elements are not abruptly discontinuous in their distribution needs no emphasis, of course; however, what is significant about the distributional gradient between the northern and southern portions of the princely state of Mysore (i.e., prior to the addition of the Bombay-Karnatak districts in 1956) is that much of Karnataka is best regarded as a transitional zone between the Kaveri core of the macro region which is delimited here and the Deccan culture area whose southern edges touch the Kistna basin.

A social element which demonstrates the transitional character of Karnataka and supports the exclusion of the Bombay-Karnatak is the attenuation of the dual division of castes into groups of the right and left hand as one moves northward from the southern parts of Karnataka. This characteristic social structural marker of the macro region is noted in early nineteenth century reports on Mysore and continue to be referred to in the censuses of the late part of the century. Oddly, there are no references in medieval inscriptions to the right hand (*balagey*) and the left hand (*eḍagey*) castes and, while these terms are used during the nineteenth century, the census reports remark that the term *phana*, was preferred to the reference to 'hands'. The 'Eighteen *Phana*s' referred to castes of the right hand, and the 'Nine *Phana*s' to those of the left hand. According to the Census Report of 1901, the word *phana* was a corruption of the Kannada word, *banna*, itself a corruption of the Sanskrit, *varṇa*.[52] In the same 1901 Census, it is noted that the dual division utilized 'eighteen' and 'nine' as conventional numbers since all but a handful of non-Brahman castes were to be regarded as either of one or the other *phana*, and of those not included in the two conventional divisions, it was noted that some numerically significant castes declared themselves to belong to a new 'twelve *phana*' category. Thus, in 1901 this division of castes in Mysore appears to have become a confused category.

However, earlier, in 1891, a larger number of persons reported themselves as affiliated with one or the other of the divisions (approximately one-half of the population), and these affiliations were tabulated on a district basis. It is strikingly clear that the dual division was more significant in the Kaveri oriented districts of

[52] *Census of India, 1901*, v. 24, Mysore, pt 1, 'Report' compiled by T. Ananda Row, Bangalore, 1903, pp. 508-10.

Mysore, Bangalore, Tumkur, Kolar, and Hassan than in the northern districts of the then Mysore princely state: Shimoga, Kadur, Chitaldrug.[53] Moreover, the acknowledged leaders of the 'Eighteen *Phana*' group (*balagey*, or right hand castes), the Banajiga in or seriously diminished incidence of the distribution regional traders, were concentrated in the southern Kaveri oriented, districts of Mysore state.[54] This is further confirmation of the break markers along the Karnatak watershed. North of this watershed, there begins a transitional zone which crosses the Tungabhadra into the Deccan. Thus, the 'Bombay-Karnatak' is treated here as another shatter-zone boundary of the macro region.

[53] *Census of India 1891*; Mysore, v. 25, pt 1, 'Report', Bangalore, 1893, pp. 308-11.
[54] Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, v. 1, p. 124, Fig. 24.

CHAPTER II

Formation of the Medieval Agrarian Order

Brahman and Peasant in Early South Indian History[1]

An agrarian system being a social arrangement involving the uses of land and its products, it is to those persistent and normative relationships among social groups that one turns first. The core of social relationships involving the land in medieval South India was that between Brahmans and peasants. It is this nexus, despite variations over time and over the complex macro region, which provides a fundamental defining characteristic of the medieval period. Modern conditions and a misplaced emphasis upon the role of the medieval South Indian state have led most scholars to consider the 'state', or formal governmental institutions, to comprehend most salient aspects of agrarian relations. Such a view is explicitly rejected here. Operations of the Pallava, Chola, and other states did not touch the core of agrarian relations in medieval South India, though the political framework established by these states had an obvious relationship with agrarian arrangements of the age. In general, the segmentary states of medieval South India assume, rather than create, an agrarian order maintained and managed by dominant peasant groups, their chiefs, and prestigious communities of Brahmans. This has been true from the time of the Pallavas when the basic structure of agrarian relations were first clearly exposed by contemporary documents. What is revealed in these Pallava documents is an agrarian order which endured for a millenium.

The period of the Pallavas associated with the line of Simhavishnu (*c.* A.D. 575-900) has been identified as transitional in a

[1] This discussion, in altered form, was first published, as 'Brahman and Peasant in Early South Indian History', The *Adyar Library Bulletin* (Dr V. Raghavan Felicitation Volume), v. 31-2 (1967-8), pp. 229-69.

number of important ways related to the development of South Indian society and culture. Among these are: the monumental building, the foundation of devotional (*bhakti*) sects upon the sacred hymns of the Saivite and Vaishnavite devotees (*nāyanār* and *āḻvār*), the efflorescence of essentially rural Brahmanical institutions as *loci* of Sanskrit learning and culture, and the establishment of kingship based upon the *cakravartin* model of rule over a territory consisting of diverse peoples. With these changes, an era in South Indian history was brought to a close. The pre-Pallavan era, though it continues to be vague in its specific social and cultural content, was characterized by quite different and distinctive elements. The most important of these were orthogenetic elements including the Tamil language, territorially segmented[2] peoples under tribal chieftains, folk religious beliefs and practices reflecting territorially segmented cultures, and a certain degree of urbanization in a few widely separated core areas of advanced agrarian and commercial organization. Coexisting with these pre-Pallavan, orthogenetic, or as sometimes called, 'Dravidian', elements were heterogenetic styles of marriage, music, and games as well as a full complement of religious forms — Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina — drawn from all parts of the sub-continent. The Classical literature[3] of the early Christian era conveys the sense of a lively,

[2] 'Territorial segmentation' refers to a characteristic of social structure in which important social relationships persistently conform to a particular and usually circumscribed territory. It is one of the ways in which social arrangements occur in many societies, but the degree to which such significant relationships as marriage, caste, and political relations reflect territorially within the Indian cultural sphere nowhere exceeds that of South India. Cf.M. Marriott, *Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan*, Deccan College Monograph Series, no. 23, Poona, 1960, especially pp. 31-6; J.S. Shahani, 'A Comparative Study of Traditional Political Organization of Kerala and Punjab', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1965; F.G. Bailey, 'Closed Stratification in India', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 4, no. 1 (1963), pp. 107-24; Stephen Fuchs, *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1960, especially pp. 133-41.

[3] The term 'Classical', is used here in preference to *śaṅgam*, following the usage of Professor George L. Hart. 'Sangams', or literary academies, of which there were allegedly three, create the sense of an institutional context which probably never existed and a false impression of the sources of the numerous poems which were anthologized a time long after their composition. See Hart's 'Ancient Tamil Literature; Its Scholarly Past and Future', originally presented to the Second Conference of the Society for South Indian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 7-9 April, 1970 and published along with other papers in Burton Stein (ed.), *Essays on South*

rich, and increasingly heterogeneous cultural milieu in which these elements — endogenous and exogenous — thrived.

There has been a tendency among South Indian historians to emphasize the disjunctive character of Pallava society and culture. The reasons for this are understandable. First, there is the fact that Pallava society was manifestly different from that portrayed in the Classical works mentioned above. Secondly, Pallava institutions provided the nascent forms of those institutions with which we identify Chola society of Rajaraja Chola, Rajendra Chola, and Kulottunga Chola I. Finally, there is the rather remarkable paucity of information about South India between the often vague and always poetical depictions of life in the Classical literature and the relatively more reliable information in Pallava inscriptions. This hiatus together with the operation of retrospective vision — that is, seeing in Pallava institutions the foundation of Chola society — has served to emphasize differences between the society and culture of the Classical age and those of Pallava times. As a result, our understanding of South Indian historical development has tended to fix the Pallava period as one of great change and disjuction.

Against this view of radical change resulting from the establishment of the Pallava line of conquerors from the northern edge of the Coromandel plain, if not beyond, a different reading of the evidence plausibly suggests a slower, less disjunctive course of social change.

This proposed more gradual development of the society and culture of South India is based upon a somewhat different evaluation of extant evidence. The evolving social order appears dimly in the earliest Prakrit records of the Pallavas, more clearly in their Sanskrit records, and finally quite clearly in the Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions of the Cholas. Such a proposal must lay heavy stress upon the processes of accommodation and assimilation among a variety of forms, indigenous and foreign, to the Tamil plain. Many of these forms are already evident in the Classical literature. These processes continued to operate, acquiring increasing cultural loads and contributing to the evolving character of Tamil and South Indian culture.

India, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1975, and Hart's recently published, *The Poems of Ancient Tamils: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975.

The character of social change inherent in this gradualist view is more congenial to our notions of how changes occur in most societies at most times; it also accords better with those facts which we possess in the particular case of the pre-Pallavan and post-Pallavan periods in South Indian history. Thus, the view that Pallavan kingship, architecture, Brahmanical language and culture were all the consequences of deliberate state policy seeking to remould the social and cultural forms which we know from the Classical works must be reassessed. Pallava military power was sufficient to the task of achieving an extensive overlordship in the Coromandel plain. However, Pallava power was not capable, in itself, of transforming social and cultural institutions as they existed in this vast territory. To produce such revolutionary changes would have required of a government those military and political techniques known in the present century, but clearly beyond the capacity of ancient Indian rulers. Nor is there evidence of a massive invasion or migration from the 'North', wherever that may be considered to be.[4]

On the contrary, there is very good evidence that the general process of 'Sanskritization'[5] was already well advanced several centuries before Pallavan power was extended southward. In

[4] While the presumed origin of the Pallavas from the north-west portion of the sub-continent, as suggested by V. Venkayya (*Annual Report, Archaeological Survey of India,* 1906-7) and others has been abandoned, there is still disagreement about Pallava origins in such standard monographs as R. Gopalan, *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi*, The Madras University Historical Series, 3 University of Madras, Madras, 1928; C. Minakshi, *Administration and Life under the Pallavas*, University of Madras, Madras, 1938, and T.V. Mahalingam, *Kancipuram in Early South Indian History*, Asia Publishing House, New York, 1969. Y. Subbarayalu, who has undertaken a revision of Gopalan's work, states his conviction that the Pallavas were indigenous to the Andhra plain (personal communication).

[5] 'Sanskritization' or, its cognates, 'Aryanization' and 'Brahmanization' are problematical terms, and though there is a growing critical literature on such terms, some convenient way is required for referring to the interaction between Dravidian elements, or other sub-cultural variants within the Indian cultural sphere, and the set of elements with which the 'Great Tradition' of India is associated. Cf.M.N. Srinivas, 'A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization', *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 15 (August, 1956), pp. 481-96 and A.P. Barnabas, 'Sanskritization', *Economic Weekly*, v. 13, no. 15 (1961), pp. 613-18. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri uses the term in his recent *The Culture and History of the Tamils*, F.K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1965, p. 18. Hart in his 'Ancient Tamil Literature . . . .', p. 33, suggests that there is as much validity in speaking of the 'Tamilizations' of Brahmans as the Sanskritization by them.

the several centuries preceding the Pallavas, this syncretic culture was linked to the dominant position achieved by peasant society over other and older cultural forms. The achievement of dominance by peasant peoples over others in South India and the firm establishment of those social and cultural forms reflecting and supporting this dominance must be considered one of the most important developments in ancient South Indian history. It was a condition which was to endure for a millenium and contributed to the identity of one of the most durable peasant culture areas in history. The Pallava period did not mark its beginning; it was then in a relatively advanced state of the evolutionary process around which the present re-evaluation of the period centres.

II

A major feature of Pallava society and that of the succeeding Chola age was that it was organized into a large number of localities of peasant society and culture. While the other elements of the Pallava period mentioned above have been recognized by historians, the fact of a prosperous, if dispersed, peasant society has tended to be overlooked.[6] This peasant society, though dispersed, may be called the dominant social and economic form of the age. By this is meant:

(1) most people appear to have lived in settled agricultural villages;

(2) peasant agriculture provided the principal means of livelihood for most of the population, directly, or indirectly, through

[6] An identification of the localities of advanced agriculture in the Coromandel plain during the Pallava period is suggested in the map of Brahman settlements, Map IV-1. The basic technique for the identification and mapping of such places involves the assumption that the *brahmadeya* is a valid marker of advanced agricultural organization in a locality since these villages of substantial Brahman population required income for their maintenance and the construction and operation of temples and *matha*s which only prosperous peasant villages could meet. In general terms, the distribution of *brahmadeya*s conforms to the distribution of those environmental factors required for advanced peasant cultivation, especially hydrological factors connected with tank and canal irrigation. The pattern which emerges, thus, is one of four major clusters: in the Kistna delta, central Tondaimandalam in the basins of the Palar and Ceyyar rivers, the Ponnaiyar basin, and, of course, the Kaveri basin. Subsidiary clusters of the Vaigai and Tamraparni appear to remain stable until after the fourteenth century. Cf. ch. IV.

related service occupations, and peasant agriculture was responsible for the overwhelmingly large source of wealth to the society at all levels;

(3) the structure of social relations for most people conform to those of peasant societies in general including:

(a) asymmetrical relations with those powerful enough to demand a part of peasant production,

(b) well-developed corporate groups within peasant settlements and localities, and

(c) effective alliances amongst various corporate elements.[7]

It is thus necessary to see the linguistic, architectural, religious, and broad cultural and political changes with which Pallava society have been associated against the position already achieved by the Coromandel peasantry in order to perceive the period in proper perspective.

Many of the peasant tracts in the Pallava heartland of Tondaimandalam, if not opened in Pallava times, were brought to their full maturity as significant agricultural territories during the Pallava period. Then, large-scale, tank-irrigation projects were carried out to convert the central Tamil plain from a region of forest and hazardous dry crop agriculture to one of reliable wet cultivation capable of supporting a dense population.[8]

Older riverine tracts of the southern Tamil plain had attained this condition long before when the Kaveri and the western portion of the Vaigai basins had become the major centres of peasant folk, and there were isolated concentrations of peasant settlements in the central plain of equal antiquity judging from the early prominence of Kanchi.[9] The urban centres of Kaverippattinam, Madurai, and Kanchi which had earlier flourished in these older tracts of

[7] An excellent discussion of peasant society is that of Wolf, *Peasants*. Because it is a general work on the subject it cannot be expected to deal with the implications of caste more than cursorily, and there is little attention given to the rather unique problems of an expanding peasant system because the work is addressed to anthropologists.

[8] This significant aspect of the Pallava period is mentioned by Minakshi, op. cit., pp. 94-100; Gopalan, op. cit., p. 155; and K.R. Subramanian, 'New Light on the Pallava Period', *Maharaja's College Magazine*, Vizianagaram, v. 6, no. 1, n.d. pp. 1-9.

[9] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'The Beginnings of Intercourse between India and China', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, v. 14 (1938), p. 386, presents evidence for Chinese trade with Kanchi in the second century B.C.

advanced agriculture continued to exist as important centres, but there was a decisive shift during the Pallava period from such isolated territories with their cities to new agricultural tracts and new rural centres. By the time of Kulottunga Chola I, the Coromandel plain between the two deltaic regions of the Kistna-Godavari and the Kaveri had become a region of peasant agriculture and society, constituting a primary zone of influence over the propinquitous interior upland in the same way that the Gangetic plain did for major portions of northern India. However, even earlier, during the Pallava period, the northern and southern portions of the plain were linked and the basic formation of the greatest southern variant of Aryan civilization achieved. Here, in the Coromandel rural setting of the Pallava period, Sanskrit and Brahmanical knowledge were firmly established, the bulk of the Brahman custodians of this knowledge lived, the saints of Saivism and Vaishnavism spent their lives, and a large population of peasants lent their support to the maintenance of this culture.

The basis of close co-operation between the peasant cultivators of the Coromandel plain and the Brahmans who lived as their spiritual preceptors and neighbours can best be understood as an alliance. Peasants, generally, are related to non-peasants in three broad ways. First, there are relationships with those whose power is sufficient to successfully demand a part of the proceeds of peasant cultivation. Second, there are more complex asymmetrical relationships between peasants and those in subordinate positions. Such subordinately related people would include non-peasant peoples brought into the lower strata of peasant society by the expansion of that society into previously forested and dry tracts; other subordinate people were those in peasant settlements whose occupations were of low value or even considered antagonistic to an expanding and increasingly powerful peasantry, such as mobile artisan-traders were for a considerable time. Somewhat less subordinately related to any localized peasant groups were various other cultivating groups, agricultural traders, and artisans closely linked to agricultural production. In contrast to these asymmetrically linked relations of peasants and others was a third set of relations with rural groups that were more nearly symmetrical. These relationships took the form of temporary coalitions, as when peasant groups of propinquitous localities combined to achieve some common endeavour (e.g. defence), or such relations might be more enduring

as in the case of relations with Brahmans. In this case, the term 'alliance' seems appropriate.

To reconcile this classification of essentially power relationships based on political and economic factors with caste relationships is not easy. Even in the Classical period, there was a system of ranked relationships among groups, and certainly, in the Pallava period, ranked relationships according to ritual purity, as enjoined by the *śāstra*s, were extolled. But alliances do not require equality among the participants; an agreement about common ends and mutually congenial means suffices. The fact of caste relationships cannot be ignored even in early Pallava times, but such relationships can be discussed within the classification of power relations involving the Coromandel peasantry at the time.

Relations between Coromandel peasants and those with a sufficiency of power to demand a regular portion of peasant production were distinctive when considered with respect to other parts of India and other peasant societies. The idealized system according to which such relationships operated in India was that involving Kshatriyas. In northern India, this ideal was realized to a large extent after the seventh century, but not so in South India. Elsewhere in India, rural dominance was the prerogative of groups of warriors enjoying high ritual status, whose locality power was maintained through extensive networks of agnatically and affinally related warrior families. In South India there certainly was awareness of Indo-Aryan, *varṇa*-organized society in which decisive secular authority vested in Kshatriyas. However, apart from certain great royal lines of warriors — such as the Pallavas, Cholas and Vijayanagara where *cakravartin* status was claimed and a royal style maintained — few locality warrior families achieved the extensive, prestigious, kin-linked organization of northern warrior/kingly groups.[10] Why the Kshatriya institution never challenged the secular authority of Brahmans and dominant peasants, the alliance between whom formed the

[10] There is a basic difference, of course, between the *cakravartin* and Kshatriya ideals of rule, and, at best, the two models cannot be more than complementary, though historically that balance has not been achieved often. In South India, the *cakravartin* model was important from Pallava times, but Kshatriyas, that is locally based warriors with ritual status sufficiently high to share high status with Brahmans did not emerge. Lacking high ascribed status in a society where this was significant, peasant warriors or those of inferior origins were always dependent upon Brahman co-operation.

keystone of local South Indian societies, is too complex an issue to be considered more than briefly here. The persistent importance of quite narrow territorial segmentation of significant social relations, which inhibited widespread marriage networks, appears to be involved here. Also important was the fact that most locality warriors of South India, in Pallava times and somewhat later, were obviously of peasant origin and derived a part of their local authority from their continued identification as such; many other warriors of lower social origins (e.g. hill people on the fringes of peasant society) appeared to have been content to rise to the status of respectable peasants. In addition, there was no conquering élite which might seek to preserve its identity through putative Kshatriya rank. But perhaps the most important reason for the failure of a Kshatriya tradition to emerge in medieval South India was the entrenched secular power of Brahmans. Collaboration with would-be Kshatriya warriors could not strengthen, but only weaken Brahman secular authority. Since Brahmans were firmly anchored in a satisfactory alliance with localized peasant groups and their chiefs, there would have been no inducement for Brahman collaboration with aspirants to Kshatriya status.

The Coromandel peasantry constituted a social system of significantly stratified interactions. Because this peasantry was constantly expanding and assimilating non-peasant peoples of the forests and dry plains who were often regarded as inferior, the matter of superordinate-subordinate relations within the peasantry is important. Though the evidence is sparse, it may be supposed that there was a constant process of social grading among the various groups of the established peasant tracts in the Coromandel plain in which the more powerful land-controlling groups sought to differentiate themselves from other agrarian groups. According to the late Classical works, including the *Cilappadikaram* (possibly of the fifth or sixth century), there was a rudimentary hierarchical ordering of social groups in which *ulavar*s, or cultivators, were regarded as the first people. Beneath the *uḷavar*s, also called *veḷḷāḷar* and *kāraḷar*, were ranked cowherds and shepherds (*āyar* and *kovalar*), hunters (*vēḍar*), various artisan groups, armed men (*paḍaiyācciar*) and, in the lowliest stratum, fishermen (*valaiyar*) and scavengers (*pulaiyar*).[11] The precise nature of status dif-

[11] V. Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Higginbotham & Co., Madras, 1904, pp. 113-14; P.T. Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils: From*

ferences suggested in these literary works cannot however be ascertained. Another, somewhat less ambiguous, vantage point on ranked relations in the early peasant society of South India occurs with the full development of that characteristic feature of social structure; the bifurcation of middle and lower castes into what among Tamil and Kannada speakers has been called castes of the right-hand (*valangai-balangai*) and castes of the left hand (*idangai-edangai*).[12]

Always in the background of these competitions among segments of localized rural groups, was the slow accretion of new people. As new tracts of land were opened by peasant colonists, those who had formerly occupied the land either fled more deeply into the forests and hills or found a place in the new order. Places had to be found for the latter within the expanding peasant tracts of Coromandel because the conversion of dry tracts or forest to wet field cultivation required the labour of many. Of the new people, some by their industry and good fortune overcame the stigma which must have attached to their previous non-peasant way of life and eventually acquired land of their own; others found or possessed a skill which was needed in the new settlement; most of the new folk, however, attached themselves to those with enough land to command a following of dependents — a mark of power and respectability then, as now, among Indian peasants.[13]

III

Surpassing all other relationships within the peasant society of this ancient period, however, was the close co-operation between Brahmans and respectable cultivating groups. Their alliance, their sharing of control in the numerous localities of advanced agriculture into which the Coromandel plain was divided, was the distinctive social and political element up to the fourteenth century. Moreover, there can be no question that the relationship

the Earliest Times to 600 A.D., C. Coomaraswamy Naidu, Madras, 1929, pp. 565, 602.

[12] The subject of the dual division is discussed above, ch. V.

[13] Agricultural labour groups attached themselves to either Brahman or Vellala landed groups from an early time. Cf. E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 5, Government Press, Madras, 1909, p. 473 and *Manual of Administration*, v. 3, p. 1037.

between Brahmans and dominant cultivators was entirely voluntary and recognized as mutually beneficial. The benefits to Brahmans are most obvious inasmuch as they are recorded in thousands of inscriptions on the walls of temple buildings which themselves are monuments of the scale of this peasant support. That the gifts of money, of a regular portion of income from peasant villages or of labour involved the invocation and ostensible ratification of the Pallava rulers, their immediate families and officials or, more often, local warrior chiefs, does not diminish the essentially voluntary nature of the gifts from locality folk who commanded them in the first instance. The determination by local people of how their resources were to be apportioned is one of the clearest features of Pallava times.

Another point, which has been inadequately appreciated with respect to peasant support of Brahmanical institutions in numerous rural settings during Pallava times and later, is that the towns of the Coromandel region were bastions of Jaina and Buddhist influence. This fact is attested by the inscriptions of such places as well as by the accounts of Buddhist pilgrims like Hsüan-tsang. Lavish support extended by townspeople to these heterodox faiths, if it did not reflect hostility towards Brahmanical institutions, certainly must have appeared to Brahmans as proceeding from a dangerous ecumenical sentiment. Thus, it should be recognized that for learned Brahmans and their ritual colleagues, it was the Coromandel countryside which offered the best, if not the only, situation for support of the multifarious activities associated with resurgent Brahmanism during the Pallava period. Other benefits to both parties in the alliance will be discussed more fully below.

The Coromandel countryside had passed through several centuries of important change by the Pallava period. Peasant societies had implanted themselves over much of the plain and had been subjected to stern challenges from non-peasant peoples. The most distinctive characteristic of the Coromandel plain north of the Kaveri basin, the oldest and most dense region of peasant agriculture and settlement in the region, was that of numerous and scattered peasant localities separated by large and small tracts of inhospitable land. Excessive slope, aridity or forest cover and other factors would have reduced the suitability of these tracts for peasant agriculture. In such inhospitable places, non-

peasant peoples could and did live.[14] The highly variegated and discontinuous physical character of the southern peninsula and the social adaptations to it had produced a set of quite stable social forms in early South India. These are prominent in Classical literature where a fivefold classification of man–nature situations *(tiṇai)* was recognized.[15] In the early centuries of the Christian era, these physiographic categories may be considered as culturally significant with respect to settings in which men of the south-eastern peninsula lived. Then, peasant folk, *ulavar*, of the *marudam*, were only one among several territorially segmented social and cultural subsystems. Each of these were different in essential ways, yet all comprised a single general culture area with shared linguistic and other cultural elements. By the ninth century, peasant society had become dominant over, without entirely eliminating, the hunting, fishing and pastoral peoples, and without reducing the territorially segmented social organization which continued to exist — even flourish — as a structural factor of great importance in South India. A recurrent poetic theme accompanied the rise of peasant groups and settlements. This theme was the fear and loathing which men of the hills and dry plains inspired in those of the plains. The *Kalittokai* of perhaps the fourth to sixth centuries refers to the *maṛavar*s of the dry plains and hills in the following terms:

[14] The general distribution of plains and forest and/ or upland tracts in Tamil country may be found in: K. Ramamurthy, 'Some Aspects of the Regional Geography of Tamilnad', *Indian Geographical Journal*, 23, nos. 2, 3, 4 (1948) and 24, nos. 2 & 3 (1949); also see B.M. Thirunaranan, 'The Traditional Limits and Subdivisions of the Tamil Region', in *K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, G.S. Press, Madras, 1940, pp. 159-69. The social aspects of this relationship in South India is very unclear still, but its general features may be presumed to follow patterns which have been suggested in the following works on India: D.D. Kosambi, 'The Basis of Ancient Indian History', in two parts in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, v. 75, nos. 1 & 4 (1955) and B.A. Saletore, *The Wild Tribes in Indian History*, Motilal Banarsidas, Lahore, 1935. For important discussions of the problem in Southeast Asia, see, for example, E.R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1954, and Robbins Burling, *Hill Farms and Padi Fields in Mainland South-East Asia*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965.

[15] P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils; From the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, University of Madras, Madras, 1929, pp. 3-12 and *passim;* also S. Vaithianathan, 'The Pattuppattu: A Historical, Social, and Linguistic Study', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1950.

> Of strong limbs and hearty frames and fierce looking as tigers, wearing long and curled locks of hair, the blood-thirsty *maṟavar*s armed with bow bound with leather, ever-ready to injure others, shoot their arrows at poor and helpless travellers, from whom they can rob nothing, only to feast their eyes on the quivering limbs of their victims. . . . The wrathful and furious *maṟavar* . . . the loud twang of whose powerful bow strings, and the stirring sound of whose doubleheaded drums, compel even kings at the head of large armies to turn their backs and fly. . .[16]

In 'The Hunters' Song' of the *Cilappadikaram* a priestess chides the *maṟavar* and *eyiṉar* hunters for failing to keep their vows to destroy the gardens of their enemies and for ceasing their practices of plundering passersby as a result of which hill villages suffered and those of the plain prospered.[17]

These literary references alert one to the hostility which appears to have existed between the lowland plain people, whose power increased in pre-Pallavan times, and the dangerous people of the hills and dry plains. By late Classical times, wealthy and populous peasant communities had probably succeeded in assimilating most pastoral and fishing groups. To the latter, substantial advantages could be offered by the peasantry even as the superior resources of the peasants of the fertile lowland proved attractive to and resulted in the assimilation of hill and dry tract people on the fringes of peasant settlements. However, a substantial population of non-peasant folk remained in scattered, isolated pockets. Between the peasants and their associates and these non-peasant people there existed the same prolonged tension as between plains and hill people elsewhere in the sub-continent as well as in many parts of South-east Asia.

Though there are important parallels in the relationship of peasant folk to non-peasant folk in remote hill settlements in South India with those in other parts of Asia, the duration of antagonism between the two in South India appears notable. Peasants were obliged to deal cautiously with such non-peasant people even after peasant society and culture had become dominant in South India. One reason for this lengthy struggle was the fact of dispersion. The discontinuous pattern of peasant settlement made peasant localities particularly vulnerable to raids. Efforts to clear hill tracts of their fierce occupants had to be considered

[16] Cited in Kanakasabhai, op.cit., pp. 42-3.
[17] Cited in Raghavan, 'Notes . . .'.

circumspectly. Even as late as the sixteenth century, the great Krishnadeva Raya counselled diplomacy and caution in dealing with the people of the hills and dry forests.[18]

A somewhat ironic factor accounting for the existence of tension between peasants and those of hills and dry plains in South India was that most of the latter shared to a greater extent than similar peoples elsewhere the culture of the peasantry. They were never a people apart — to be ignored or massacred — as in parts of South-east Asia. A measure of this shared culture has been the ease with which non- or partially-peasantized warriors of hills and dry plains were able to establish themselves as masters over peasant peoples until the nineteenth century. During the pre-Pallava period, when conditions were fluid and the peasant frontier constantly expanding, physical and cultural proximity provided the opportunity for close interaction even within a generally hostile and competitive context.

A turning point in the relationship between the peasant peoples of the plains and their non-peasant adversaries may have come in the still mysterious period before the seventh century. According to the scanty literary and inscriptional evidence relating to that period, peasants of the Coromandel plain, especially in its southern extremity, were subjected to the control of a people or peoples who were recalled with terror.[19] When, for how long, by whom and which of the Coromandel peasantry were thus subjugated is not clear. Whether it was a single conquering people from beyond the Tamil plain, as has been suggested, or from within the region, and whether the conquest was that of a single people or many, are queries unanswerable from the extant evidence. The name most often associated with these conquering people is *kaḷabhra* (Pali : *kalabba*) of whom it was said they abused families of local chiefs of the plain and the Brahmans of the villages; another name is *kaḷavar*.[20] While they were different from the plains people,

[18] A. Rangasvami Sarasvati, 'Political Maxims of the Emperor-Poet, Krishnadeva Raya', *Journal of Indian History*, v. 4, pt 3 (1925), pp. 61-88; also cited in Saletore, *Wild Tribes in Indian History*, p. 12.

[19] The sources are reviewed by Nilakanta Sastri in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, University of Madras, Madras, 1935, pp. 119-21 and include as most important, the Velvikudi grant of the late eighth century and Buddhadatta's Manual. Cf. Srinivasa Iyengar, op cit., pp. 436-7.

[20] Attempts to link the *Kaḷabhra*s and *kaḷavar*s with the kallars of the southern Tamil plain have not been generally accepted: cf. ibid., pp. 437-8, 535.

these conquering folk are, at least later, were admired by some Tamil poets as upholders of some Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina institutions.[21]

This 'Kalabhra interregnum', as it is sometimes called, may mark a point where non-peasant people made their strongest bid to control some, at least, of the lowland, peasant population; this may have been in the very southern portion of the peninsula since Pandyan inscriptions are the source of the most vehement judgements of Kalabhras. Whether in Pandya country alone or elsewhere, this onslaught appears to have been the culmination of a long period of non-peasant, armed resistance to the expansion of peasant society, and it was distinguished by the attempt of the 'interlopers', as Nilakanta Sastri has called them,[22] to establish their sway over peasants without, apparently, adopting substantial elements of Coromandel peasant culture. This attempt failed, and with the assertion of Pallava warrior control over the northern and central portion of the plain and that of the Pandya rulers over the southern Tamil plain by the late sixth century, the dominance of the peasant people and the society which they maintained was never again lost. True, warriors from the hills continued to raid and plunder peasant settlements at the fringes of peasant core areas, and they occasionally set up durable power among the peasant people — as did the Hoysalas in Karnataka[23] — but such durable power was facilitated by the adoption of the two elements rejected by the Kalabhras: respect for and support of Brahmanical institutions and Hinduism as well as recognition of locality chiefs who were, in most cases, members of the dominant peasant group of the locality. After the seventh century, confirmed in military dominance and cultural superiority, peasant society continued its steady encroachment upon non-peasant peoples, at times slowly, at other times rapidly.

The full implications of the so-called 'Kalabhra interregnum' and the establishment of Pallava power over much of the Tamil plain have only recently begun to be appreciated from the cultural and social point of view. Nilakanta Sastri has stated:

> We may perhaps surmise the Kalavar-kalabras were a widespread tribe whose large scale defection to the heretical faiths [Jainism and Buddhism] resulted in a political and social upset lasting over some generations.[24]

[21] Ibid., p. 535.

[22] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 121.

That this intrusion upon the expanding order of peasant peoples had important consequences seems quite clear. The reference above to 'heretical faiths' is significant because the Kalabhra ruler and conqueror of Madurai, Accuta Vikkanta, is said by the writer Buddhadatta to have been his patron. Some of the songs celebrating this Accuta are reported by Amitasagara, a tenth century Jaina grammarian.[25] Moreover, in the centuries between the Classical works and the Pallavas of Kanchi, the zenith of Jaina and Buddhist influence in South India was achieved. During this period, the influence of Aryan cults, the earliest evidence of which are found in caves of about the third to the first century B.C. bearing Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions,[26] increased in South India. This contributed to the increasing tempo of cultural change.[27] It also appears that during the same period these cults coexisted peacefully with each other and with indigenous forms of religion and that the Jaina and Buddhist sects of South India were as successful as Saivite and Vaishnavite sects in winning the allegiance of leaders in South Indian society.[28] Reference has already been made to the support of urban people. Among warriors, Accuta Vikkanta Kalabhra was probably a Buddhist, and Mahendravarman I, the Pallava ruler of the late sixth century began his reign as a Jaina and is supposed to have persecuted Siva worshippers until the time of his conversion by the Saivite saint (*nāyanār*) Appar (Tirunavukkarasu). As a result of the support of the powerful, Jainas and Buddhists could boast of a number of impressive monastic establishments in many parts of South India.[29] The Chinese pilgrim, Hsüan-tsang, in the middle

[23] J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysalas*, O.U.P., Madras, 1951, pp. 16-19.

[24] Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History* . . ., p. 19.

[25] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 120 and his *Culture and History* . . ., p. 19; also Srinivasa Iyengar, op. cit., p. 528, dates Buddhadatta in the late fifth century.

[26] K. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, pp. 140-1.

[27] Srinivasa Iyengar, op.cit., p. 18.

[28] Evidence of this is massive: cf.M.S. Ramaswami Ayyangar and B. Seshagiri Rao, *Studies in South Indian Jainism*, Hoe & Co., Madras, 1922 and the works of of P.B. Desai. It is of interest that perhaps the earliest, important Tamil inscription records an endowment to a Jain teacher: K. Zvelebil, *Tamil in 550 A.D.: An Interpretation of Early Inscriptional Tamil*, Oriental Institute, Prague, 1964.

[29] Appar himself, as a Jaina monk, before his reversion to Saivism, served in a monastery at Cuddalore, South Arcot. Scholars have pointed to the significance of the number '63' used first by Jainas, then by Saivites for the most honoured saints, and the transformation of niches of Jaina shrines to hold Saivite shrines when the

seventh century, commented on such establishments in various parts of the Coromandel plain, and the latter reported that his own Buddhism was giving way to Digambara Jainism.[30] These accounts, plus numerous inscriptions, including early Tamil Brahmi ones and others of the sixth century, bear eloquent testimony to the widespread support enjoyed by 'heretical' centres from the powerful and the wealthy.

Under the circumstances of apparently peaceful competition among the religious cults in pre-Pallava times, the 'heretical' sects of Buddhism and Jainism were in thriving condition. Scholars have noted with surprise that Hsüan-tsang, in A.D. 642, seemed completely unaware of the *bhakti* revival which was being carried forward by Saivite and Vaishnavite hymnists. To assume that his indifference to this movement was a consequence of this Chinese pilgrim's prejudice for or a preoccupation with Buddhism may be justified, but he did report the relative and growing success of Jainas — and may have faithfully reflected the favour which Jainism found with warriors prior to and during the early years of Pallava rule in South India.[31] There is also good reason to believe that the worship of Jaina goddesses *(yakshinis)* inspired popular support.[32]

It hardly seems possible to separate the 'Kalabhra interregnum', or what is perhaps better understood as the extension of non-peasant, warrior control over the plains, from the favour shown by these warriors to Jainism. Rather, it seems appropriate to suggest that the attractiveness of Jainism was that it permitted a warrior to achieve legitimacy and 'Aryan' respectability without necessarily accepting the elements of contemporary peasant culture with which Hindu sects had become associated at the time. Among such elements would have been the high secular place accorded to Brahmans and the primacy of sedentary peasant agriculture. Certainly, the correlation of non-peasant warrior power with

buildings were taken over by the latter, as at Madurai. Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History* . . . , pp. 109-10 and Ramaswami Ayyangar, op.cit., p. 78. Also see: P.B. Desai, *Jainism in South India*, Jaina Samskṛti Samkaksha Sangha, Sholapur, 1957, and R. Champakalakshmi, 'Jainism in South India', unpublished M. Litt. thesis, Department of History, University of Madras, 1958.

30 Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History* . . . , pp. 113-14.

31 Minakshi, op.cit., pp. 213-38.

32 This is argued by P.B. Desai, op.cit., pp. 38-40, 72-4.

Jainism compels a consideration of Jainism not so much as a 'heretical' sect but as an ideological element in the critical period of struggle between the militarily formidable non-peasant people of South India and perhaps peasants of dry, and mixed dry and wet ecotypic situations in South India against the increasingly prosperous and important agricultural people of the riverine plains. Just as the ascetic or monastic figure of the Jain monk symbolized one form of sacredness and the *grhastha* Saivite or Vaishnavite Brahman symbolized an alternate form of sacredness, the morally complete and ritually independent Jaina king represented one kind of royal legitmacy and the ritually dependent Hindu king, with his Brahman *purohita* and royal sacrifices represented another kind.[33] The bitterness and violence with which sectarian controversy erupted by the seventh century suggests an ideological component of considerable importance.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, the tolerant relations among religious sects in South India had clearly come to an end.[34] Mahendravarman I persecuted Saivites until his conversion; then he turned on Jainas.[35] Later, the Saivite saint Sambandar who converted the Pandyan ruler, is celebrated in an annual festival at the Minaksi temple of Madurai which commemorates the impalement of 8,000 Jaina heads at the young saint's urging.[36] Still later, in the eighth century, Nandivarman II Pallavamalla, an ardent Vaishnavite, carried out persecution of Jainas and Bud-

[33] This statement is fully elaborated in an essay by the author entitled, 'All the Kings' Mana: Perspectives on Kingship in Medieval South India', in a volume of essays, entitled *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, under the editorship of John F. Richards by the Center of South Asian Studies of the University of Wisconsin in 1978. The terms 'ideology' and 'ideological' inevitably present difficulties. Ideology is taken to be rhetoric, or persuasive speech which pertains to moral issues in social arrangements. It is therefore a form of moral reasoning intended to provide a basis for adjudicating conflicting claims or justifying particular arrangements in a society. Ideology contrasts with theology in its concern with conflictful relations among men rather than among gods or conceptions of deity.

[34] This proposition seems generally accepted among Pallava historians even though Minakshi, op. cit., p. 170, could state after reviewing the evidence of Pallava persecution: '. . . Pallava monarchs as a class [?] were tolerant towards these religious sects.'

[35] Subramanian, 'New Light . . .', p. 7.

[36] Reported by Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History* . . . , op. cit., p. 110. He could not credit the notion that the saintly Sambandar conceived this horror, but acknowledged that the festival continues to be celebrated.

dhists, and his contemporary, the Vaishnavite hymnist Tirumangai is said to have plundered the Buddhist vihara at the town of Nagapattinam using the golden image to finance the construction of walls around the principal shrine at Srirangam and other benefices.[37]

Another aspect of this complicated interplay of religious activities and power relations throughout the Coromandel plain during the pre- and early Pallava period is that of the *bhakti* movement. Hymns of Saivites (*Tēvāram*) and Vaishnavites (*Nālāyira Prabandham*) were the works of those from all social strata, from Brahman to untouchable. At a time when Siva and Vishnu worship was apparently still dominated by Brahman votaries of the *jñaña-yoga* tradition, these works reflect an impressive cult devotionalism. Between the chaste religion of *jñañayogin*s and the 'excesses' of such Saivite cults as the Pasupatas, Kapalikas, Kalamukhas, and others,[38] *bhakta*s of the hymnal tradition presented a religion apparently suited to the peasant society which was achieving supremacy over the non-peasant peoples.[39] Theirs was a religious tradition well-rooted in the devotional faith of peaceful people of the plain. It had other advantages as well. It was congenial to Brahman religious leaders in its philosophical presuppositions, and it offered a powerful theological and ideological counter to Jainas and Buddhists. Indeed, many of the Saivite hymns condemned Jainas and Buddhists and the *Nālāyira Prabandham* of the Vaishnava *bhakta*s castigated Jainism.[40] The attack upon Jainism and Buddhism attained its philosophical culmination in the work of Sankara by which time, for all practical purposes, the victory of the new, devotional orthodoxy over Jainism and Buddhism had been assured as a consequence of the assimilation of folk religion and by the crucial shift of popular support to the puranic cults of Siva and Vishnu.

The tension between peasants and non-peasants, the 'Kalabhra interregnum' as an event in that prolonged and hostile relationship, and the ideological significance of religious controversy in connection with the competition between peasant and non-peasant powers in the Coromandel plain are all factors which appear to be related

[37] Ibid, pp. 112-13 and Minakshi, op. cit., pp. 170-1.

[38] D.N. Lorenzen, *The Kapālikas and Kālāmukhas; Two Lost Saivite Sects*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972.

[39] Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History . . .*, pp. 111-12.

[40] Minakshi, op. cit., p. 170.

to the peasant-Brahman alliance of the Pallava period. To the extent that scholars have concerned themselves with Brahman-peasant relationships heretofore, two different kinds of explanations have been favoured. The first has presumed that the conquering Pallavas instituted not only political–military changes assuring ascendancy over the people of Tondaimandalam, but simultaneously they set into motion the linguistic, architectural, and comprehensively 'Brahmanical' changes of which mention has been made. It is further implied that the Pallava state used force, or the threat of force, as well as its command over the wealth of the territory, to establish landed Brahman settlements throughout the central Coromandel plain. An alternative line of explanation advanced to explain the manifestly voluntary nature of peasant support to Brahmans is that peasants, recognizing the special learning, piety, and probity of Brahmans, subordinated their institutions such as the peasant village assembly (*ūr*) to those of Brahmans, such as the Brahman assembly (*mahāsabhā*) and allocated a substantial portion of their wealth as well.

Both of these explanations are somewhat flawed. If Pallava rulers were powerful enough to have brought about the changes attributed to them — a highly doubtful proposition in itself — why would they have permitted such complete self-government, including the right of Brahman villages to dispose of not only their own resources but those of dependent villages as well? Were the Pallavas so different from other Indian warriors and overlords that resource-control meant less to them, or were they more deeply pious than others? Could not their piety have been served as well by making direct endowments for specific Brahmanical undertakings without surrendering such a substantial degree of political and social control? This was done in other times in South India or in other parts of India. As to the putative piety of Coromandel peasants, it is clear that there had existed for several centuries prior to the establishment of Pallava power a sympathetic relationship between peasants and Brahmans; certainly, Brahmans had lived among and upon the generosity of the peasantry in those centuries, and even if Brahmans shared religious functions and material rewards with others, including 'heretical' teachers and non-Brahman ritual functionaries, they held an esteemed place in Coromandel society. Moreover, there is no convincing evidence that the Pallavas ever achieved sufficient power or organization

to assert their authority effectively over the powerful local institutions of Brahmans and peasants of which we have considerable evidence.

Since an alliance is a voluntary association to achieve particular ends, the most plausible answer to the question of why an alliance existed — or why people or groups who were not constrained to act together, did so — is in the identification of the interests which appear to be satisfied by the alliance. The Brahman-peasant alliance of the Pallava period was based upon the convergence of important interests which came to exist between those who cultivated the land along with their dependents and those who by their sacral functions possessed a powerful ideological capability. The benefits were mutual and alliance durable. For Brahmans, the advantages were the following. Jaina and Buddhist sectarians had positioned themselves strongly in the towns of Coromandel and among many warriors, especially those beyond the core areas of peasant society where tribal organization remained important. The remains of early Jaina shrines in many ancient peasant villages of the plains suggest, moreover, that the Jaina goddess (*yakshini*) cult was held in high favour by many peasants. Brahmans, on the other hand, were perhaps most securely situated in the many peasant villages and localities of the plain and had already established close relations with dominant peasant groups many of whose ritual requirements they met. The expansion of peasant society before the seventh century provided Brahmans with the most promising basis for maintaining and extending their position. Moreover, adoption of devotional, temple-centred forms of ritual by Brahmans required a new scale of support which peasants of the plains could best provide. In this connection, one cannot overlook the relationship between the ritual requirements of the devotional religion and the need for large concentrations of Brahmans in the Coromandel type of *brahmadeya* which makes its appearance during Pallava times. Apart from towns, and these were relatively few and inhospitable to Brahmans for a long time, wealth sufficient to support devotional temple-based Hinduism existed only in prosperous peasant villages. For reasons of their own, dominant peasant groups were ready to deepen the existing relations with Brahmans supporting the Brahman claims to ritual primacy and the norms of stratified interaction required by caste.

The corresponding interests of the Coromandel peasantry

appear to be the following, Having come through a period when non-peasant power seriously threatened their security — of which Kalabhra control, especially in Pandya country, was perhaps only the clearest example — peasant groups may have felt considerable need for greater ideological coherence as a means of unifying the diverse segments of peasant society against similar threats in the future. Some protection was certainly afforded by Pallava rule after A.D. 550, and the Pallavas had broad peasant support in recognition of that protection. Beyond this threat of conquest, the leading cultivating groups were also faced with the need to assimilate new people to the peasant order and to preserve their own place of ascendacy in that order. The means for accomplishing these objectives could be found in the system of stratification according to ascribed ritual purity in which the respectable and powerful cultivators were acknowledged to be next only to Brahmans in moral standing. They were accorded the status of *sātvik*, or men of a respectable way of life, and thus distinguished from lower orders of the population. When added to the economic and military position of Vellalas and other similar cultivating peoples, Brahmanical caste relations provided the means for internal regulation of established peasant localities as well as new tracts open to peasant occupation. Changes in prevailing Brahmanical religious forms to those more congenial to the devotional religion of peasants made the alliance easier to achieve and sustain — a factor which should perhaps be given greater weight in our understanding of the *bhakti* movement.

For the Coromandel peasantry, the gains in the alliance were extremely important. Devotional sects provided expanded opportunities for participation in Hindu ritual for at least the highest and middle status groups living in villages around *brahmadeyas*. One cannot speak of this as a new activity, for Brahmans had lived among peasants for centuries ministering rituals associated with life cycle and village ceremonies. However, the shift of religious ritual increasingly to Brahmanical temples sheltering Vedic gods and the elaboration of devotional forms must have been addressed as much to the religious requirements and beliefs of this peasant population among whom Brahmans lived as to the canons of Brahmanical orthodoxy. Ancient folk deities were assimilated — Seyon, or Murugan, of the hill regions (*kuṟiñji*) became identified with Subrahmanya, and Mayon, the black god of the pastoralists,

was readily transformed into Krishna;[41] *Āgamic* prescriptions were altered or created to facilitate the inclusion by Brahmans of many new folk elements and the partial exclusion of others such as animal sacrifices and excessively erotic religious customs.

Devotional religion from the early Pallava period onwards, insofar as it involved the sacral activities of Brahmans, did not include the participation of all segments of the peasant population. Specifically, it excluded those whose status was below the broad and complex strata denominated by Brahmans as 'Sudra'. As a social category, Sudra has been even less relevant in South India than elsewhere in the Indian cultural sphere, but with respect to ritual participation it continued to have currency. In the religious activities of Pallava times, the first signs of what was to become the enduring pattern of social stratification in South India became evident. Three strata, comprised of Brahmans, respectable or 'clean' non-Brahmans, and low castes, seem to have been recognized for ritual purposes, and each of these was a complex aggregate of groups with some mobility between strata. While each strata, even that of Brahman, could not be considered closed, corporate entities such as those idealized in the *varṇa* conception, the middle strata was perhaps the most complex and least stable. Occupying this level were most of the peasantry with some claim to land or to an agrarian-skill which was valued, and ranking within the category was so competitive and indeterminate that the dual division into right and left-hand castes became an important structural ancillary. It appears that the right-hand division of castes — of whom we learn something during the Chola period — were those whose relations to the peasant agrarian system were most direct, including, as it did, cultivators and those artisans and merchants directly involved in the agricultural economy. The left-hand division appeared to provide an association of groups less directly involved with agriculture. As suggested above, the most important cultivating groups, such as the Vellalas, Reddis and Kammas, sought to remain above the dual division, along with Brahmans. To accomplish this would have required more than landed wealth alone; it required a special relationship with Brahmans based upon ritual opportunities not shared by other non-Brahmans. In later medieval times, especially among Srivaishnavas,

[41] Srinivasa Iyengar, op. cit., pp. 76-7, 355, 612.

such people often achieved considerable, if insecure, prominence in temples, and there were some castes of non-Brahman Saivites about whom little has been written, that enjoyed a special relationship with Brahmans for substantial periods. Given the system of ritually protected stratification which caste has been, and given the profoundly greater evidence of Brahmanical influence during and after the Pallava period, it appears probable that the most powerful and established cultivating groups in any of the numerous peasant localities of Coromandel would have sought to use the prestige of association with Brahmans as a means of stabilizing their position with respect to other groups within the localized peasant societies of the plain.

IV

This analysis of the Brahman-peasant alliance of the Pallava period and the presumed reasons for its existence has sought to emphasize factors which are perhaps inadequately appreciated by many Indian historians. These factors are mundane, and because the alliance conception proposed here may be seen to distort or to pervert what most historians of South India continued to view as a purely religious development, the proposal requires clarification.

There are probably few historians of early South India who would disagree that an enduring and symbiotic relationship between dominant cultivators of the most productive and prosperous zones of agriculture and Brahmans had come into existence in pre-Pallavan and Pallavan times. Nor would there be disagreement that this relationship deepened and elaborated through subsequent historical periods. But these same scholars might cavil at the idea that this relationship could be called an 'alliance' or that *bhakti* Hinduism of the South Indian macro region, in any important sense, reflected the quite worldly concerns of peasants and priests. Religious change, especially such fundamental change as the displacement of sacrificial forms of the Brahmanical religion and Jainism and Buddhism, tends to be seen conventionally as the evolution of or a dialectical process involving an ancient religious devotionalism of Tamils in relation to ancient theological or philosophical conceptions long present in Brahmanical thought.[42]

[42] See the forthcoming essay by Friedhelm Hardy, 'Ideology and Cultural Con-

Such a perception of religious change as independent of social contexts and processes is generally difficult to consider; in India this notion of religious thought and institutions as compartmentalized, as somehow isolated from the nexus of social, political, and economic relationships, is certainly doubtful, if not wholly unacceptable. Therefore, it is quite essential to specify how and why religious and non-religious factors interacted to shape both religious and non-religious ideas and institutions in early South India.

In emphasizing the ideological component of Hinduism as a factor in the alliance of Brahmans and peasants, it is not denied that quite genuine piety motivated the actions of many peasants nor that many Brahmans whole-heartedly subscribed to the popular and devotional tenets of *bhakti* faith. However, in seeking to understand the factors involved in the balanced and durable alliance of Coromandel Brahmans and peasants, piety appears a weak analytical reed. For, when the Brahman-peasant alliance changed after the fourteenth century, are we to suppose that piety ceased or changed? Where, as in Hinduism, we have a religion which is not compartmentalized but comprehends a 'total way of life', we must expect to find in religion symbols and dispositions much which we do not regard as essentially religious. We should expect to find injunctions about basic patterns of livelihood, power, social relations, and those systematically related, morally-valenced, and publicly-expressed (in inscriptions) secular ideas which constitute the ideology of any people. And when, as in Pallava times and later, the premier religious functionaries are found to be linked to powerful peasant groups, the ideological component of religion should assume a high order of priority in our understanding of agrarian relations. Religion was made to serve the Brahman-peasant alliance which constituted the underpinning of localized, self-governing territories in South India from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries. In the succeeding period of agrarian organization, when Muslim pressure upon the northern edges of the Coromandel plain created the conditions for the expansion of the highly martial Telugu warriors of the Vijayanagara period, religion again served to provide an essential cohesion to

texts of the Srīvaiṣṇava Temple' in a symposium on South Indian temples (edited by Burton Stein) by *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, v. 14 (Jan.-March 1977), pp. 119-51.

different fundamental relationships in South Indian society.[43]

Prevailing interpretations of the Pallava period as one of significant, disjunctive change have tended to ignore the steady expansion of peasant society and culture from the Classical period. This expansion over the entire Coromandel plain and the ultimate emergence of powerful peasant peoples fundamentally altered relationships among peoples of the society of South India as described in the early poems of the Tamils. In particular, it set the peoples of the river plain and their subordinate allies, the pastoralists and fishing folk, against the non-peasant peoples of the forests and dry uplands, matching the superior populations and wealth of the former against the military capabilities of the latter. It is suggested that the 'Kalabhra interregnum' may be recognized as a period of momentary success on the part of the non-peasant peoples seeking to achieve control over the plains of the Southern peninsula and that the establishment of Pallava rule may be taken as the ultimate triumph of the wealthy plainsmen. It is further proposed that the social and cultural changes associated with Pallava rule in Tondaimandalam and eventually the entire Tamil, Karnatak, and Telugu plains are to be understood as a part of the effort of the peasant people of this macro region to achieve and consolidate that victory. To this end, the Coromandel peasantry supported Pallava kings as *cakravartins* who were rulers over a territory not over a people as in older forms of kingship and who were committed to the prosperity and protection of the peasantry. Similarly, the South Indian peasantry supported the development of devotional Hinduism not simply from reasons of piety or respect for its Brahman functionaries but for the contribution religion could make to the ideological cohesiveness of the plains people. Great settlements of Brahmans became centres of the revitalized religion just as they served as centres of the peasant culture of the plains in other ways, and these centres, for all of their ostensible domination by learned and pious Brahmans displayed many signs of the association with the peasantry, including the devotional folk elements of the religion and the continued strength of peasant

[43] Ibid. Another essay in the temple symposium is Arjun Appadurai's 'Kings, Sects and Temples in South India: 1350-1700 A.D.'; this essay deals with Telugu warriors' successful integration into temples of Tamil country.

corporate group life. Situated in the most developed peasant tracts of the Coromandel plain, these great Brahman settlements could not but show themselves to be bastions of plains culture reflecting the close collaboration between Brahmans and peasants.

CHAPTER III

Peasant Micro Regions: The *Nadu*

The macro region defined above was comprised of numerous distinctive localities which increased in the period from the ninth to the twelfth centuries with the expansion of peasant society. Varying according to ecological conditions, proximity to established older cores of peasant settlement, and their social composition, these micro regions were the enduring and basic units of South Indian peasant society. Most predated the Cholas and most, while retaining their identity and organization, were capable, at times, of being aggregated as larger territorial entities under various kinds of overlords. Occasionally, this massing of localities was carried out by members of the Chola royal family, especially in the Kaveri delta, but more often by chiefs, themselves locality notables and closely linked to the dominant peasantry of the place. From the Pallava period until quite recent times, these micro regions constituted the basic 'arena'—to use F.G. Bailey's term—of the functioning peasant society.[1] That is, the peasant locality was an interactional region defined by relatively dense interrelations among social groups with common interests in some tract of cultivable land.

Nāḍu is the term which designated the micro region. It is also used in the Chola period to designate an assembly of the micro region. Etymologically, *nadu* refers to agricultural land in con-

[1] Quoted from F.G. Bailey, 'Politics and Social Change in Orissa' in *Politics and Society in India*, ed. C.H. Phillips, London, 1962, and commented upon by Barun De, 'A Historical Perspective on Theories of Regionalisation in India', in *Regions and Regionalism in South Asian Studies: An Exploratory Study*, ed. Robert I. Crane, Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, Duke University, Monograph no. 5, Durham, N.C., 1966, pp. 54-5. *See* also Bailey's discussion in his, *Tribe, Caste, and Nation; A Study of Political Activity and Political Change in Highland Orissa*, O.U.P., Bombay, 1960, pp. 269-70.

trast to *kāḍu*, a Dravidian word for forest or other land not suited to cultivation.[2]

In Classical poems, *nadu* appears to have been consistently contrasted to hill and forest country as in the *Puṟanāṉūṟu* where a Chera king is said to rule over the hills, the forests, and the *nadu*, and where the Chola Karikala is said to have 'made *nāḍu' (nāḍu akkī)* by 'clearing forests' *(kāḍu koṉru)*.[3] Most *nadu*s are identified by the name of some village from as early as the Classical period. In Tondaimandalam another term, *kūṟṟam*, is used along with *nadu*. *Kurram*, in some inscriptional contexts appears to be equivalent to *nadu* though this is the subject of some controversy among scholars.[4] The term *kōṭṭam* also occurs in Tondaimandalam and may not have been a simple equivalent of *nadu; kōṭṭam* appears to designate physical sub-regions of the central Tamil plain marked by the topographically prominent distribution of hills to which the root of the word, *kōṭ-*, may refer.[5]

Nowithstanding differences among scholars regarding possibly meaningful distinctions among these various terms, there is general agreement that the territorial term *nadu* has primacy as the fundamental building block of rural organization during the Chola period.

Long ignored by historians of the Chola period, the *nadu* has recently been the subject of a serious and able study by Y. Subbarayalu, a substantial portion of whose monograph on Chola country from A.D. 800 to 1300 is devoted to this territorial unit.

'The Nadu', Subbarayalu writes, 'is the very key to political geography of the Chōla country. It was a very important limb of the administrative system of the period . . . and it was the basic unit of the then agrarian society.'[6] Treating the territorial unit *kurram* as synonymous with *nadu*, Subbarayalu has identified and mapped 140 in Cholamandalam and sixty-five in the territory immediately north of Chola country, Naduvil-nadu, as of about

[2] *D.E.D.*, no. 3012, p. 242, '*nāṭu*'.

[3] Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola Country*, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, Madras, 1973, p. 32.

[4] B. Suresh, 'Historical and Cultural Geography and Ethnography of South India with Special Reference to Cola Epigraphs', unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Deccan College, University of Poona, 1965, p. 30 (hereafter: *HCGESI*). Also Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 465; Subbarayalu, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

[5] Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 25-6.

[6] Subbarayalu, op. cit., p. 19.

A.D. 1300.[7] He has also identified more than 1,300 villages within these two sub-regions of the Tamil plain of which 1070 were in the 140 *nadu*s of Cholamandalam and the remainder in the adjoining sixty-five *nadu*s of Naduvil-nadu.[8] In addition to the perennial region of the Kaveri basin, Subbarayalu has also delineated 203 *nadu*s in the central Tamil plain of Tondaimandalam. Here, between the northern and southern Penner rivers, were located 638 villages during the Chola period. Other territories similarly treated are: Kongu country in the interior upland of modern Salem and Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu with thirty-two *nadu*s and 106 villages positively located; Pandimandalam (modern Madurai) had ninety-five and 490 respectively; Gangavadi (*gaṅga-pāḍi* or *muḍikoṇḍachōla-maṇḍalam* as it was also called) in southern Karnataka provides evidence of eleven *nadu*s and twenty-five villages and in several other smaller tracts, Subbarayalu has located twenty *nadu*s and fifty-eight villages. Thus, by about A.D. 1300, it is possible to locate with considerable certainty 556 localities in a substantial portion of the peninsular macro region based upon the certain location of 2,620 villages mentioned in contemporary inscriptions.

Maps prepared by Subbarayalu also indicate two related characteristics of the *nadu* which emphasizes its essential agrarian functions. The first is the relationship of size and proximity to reliable water sources. *Nadu*s of the Chola country vary in area from ten to three hundred square miles. Considering only those *nadu*s whose boundaries can be fixed with a high degree of certainty, sixty-eight in Chola country and fifteen in Naduvil-nadu, the following variation is discovered.

Larger *nadu*s were located on the infertile, poorly-watered margins of the riverine plain according to the maps prepared by Subbarayalu. In such relatively inhospitable tracts there were fewer villages and people than in the deltaic portions of the plain with its greater availability of moisture. Their boundaries reveal a second predictable characteristic related to the agrarian functions

[7] He has also included the infrequent terms *kaṇdam* and *vaṭṭam* (used in five cases) as equal to *ṇadu* (op. cit., p. 46-7).

[8] Naduvil-nadu is referred to by other names: Nadu-nadu, Naduvunilai-nadu, and Naduvu-nadu; the tract is situated between Tondaimandalam and Cholamandalam, between the southern Penner and the northern Vellaru rivers, ibid., p. 31; also *see*, K.S. Vaidyanathan, 'Ancient Geographical Divisions of Tamil

* TABLE III-I

Areal Variation of Selected *Nadus*: A.D. 1300

Area Sq. mi.	Cholamandalam S=68	Naduvil-nadu S=15
8-12	5	8
15-20	24	4
25-30	23	1
35-40	10	0
50	1	1
65	1	0
70-80	2	1
180	1	0
300	1	0

of these locality tracts. Subbarayalu's maps show that most *nadu*s lie athwart water-courses, the principal discriminating physical feature of much of the plain. Only the major perennial rivers, Kaveri and Penner, constituted boundaries. The flow of these latter rivers was large and reliable enough for agriculturists on both banks to use without the necessity of joint management. Not even the Kollidam (modern Coleroon) river, the most important branch of the Kaveri, constituted a reliable demarcation of *nadu*s; several of the localities on this river are found on both sides of it (e.g. *kalāra-kūrram*, *viḷanāḍu*, *veṇṇaiyūr-nāḍu*)[9] and even the southern Vellaru, which was an ancient dividing marker between Chola and Pandya countries, appeared in the Chola period to have some *nadu*s lying on both of banks (e.g. *olliyūr-kūrram*, *kūḍalūr-nāḍu*, and *peruvāyil-nāḍu*).[10]

The spatial and temporal demarcation of *nadu*s depends upon the location of villages said in the existing inscriptions to belong to a particular one. There are numerous detailed descriptions of village boundaries, but not a single inscription which defines the boundaries of a *nadu*. Core settlements can be located with reasonable certainty from their names as well as from locational factors such as streams, canals, tanks, and hills which are mentioned in inscriptions; such places may often be found on modern, large-scale (one inch to

Nadu', *Handbook (Kaiyēdu), II International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1968, p. 234.

[9] Subbarayalu, op. cit., 22.

[10] Loc. cit.

one mile) maps. However, in other tracts, features such as forests, jungle, scrub, long converted to cultivation (and in some cases successively reclaimed as we know from eighteenth century records), can rarely be found. In general, the further removed from the principal water sources of a locality, the greater the difficulty in delineating the boundaries of a particular locality. Many of the villages referred to in inscriptions cannot be located at all. This is hardly surprising; rather, it is striking how many settlements of the medieval period still exist with names but little altered from ancient times.

Another, quite minor, problem in mapping the *nadu*s of the Chola period is that a small number of villages can be shown probably to have been transferred from one to another. Subbarayalu estimates that he has encountered about fourteen cases of such transfers in Cholamandalam, a number he considers insignificant considering that there were some 200 in Chola country and the period over which he was surveying the evidence was five hundred years.[11] Moreover, the inscriptional record does not deal explicitly with such apparent transfers, hence it is impossible to be even somewhat clear about why such transfers took place. Subbarayalu does point out that in all cases, the transferred settlements were at the borders of their respective *nadu*s, that is, at a relatively great distance from their core settlements.

Finally, of course, there is the problem which exists for any research based on inscriptions, that is, the incompleteness of the record. Not all villages can be presumed to have received inscriptional mention. The stone and copperplate records which contain references to villages are not all preserved and legible; and not all of these records have been collected or even noticed in epigraphical surveys. Notwithstanding all of these problems, the survey and mapping which has been done reveals matters of the greatest importance for an understanding of early agrarian relationships in South India.

The distribution of peasant villages in the some 500 *nadu*s of the territory under Chola overlordship was most decisively shaped by the availability of reliable irrigation sources. The overall density of villages in parts of the Kaveri delta reflects this relationship. Subbarayalu has estimated that there was one village per two square miles in places of reliable water supply. In Cholamandalam,

[11] Ibid., pp. 22 ff.

most (i.e. two-thirds) of the *nadu*s with reasonably ascertainable boundaries fell within the range of fifteen to thirty square miles and in Naduvil-nadu most (i.e., four-fifths) fell within the range of eight to twenty square miles.[12] These quite restricted localities exist in the best agricultural tracts where definiteness of boundaries is related to high population and thus to the existence of many villages capable of being assigned to one or another *nadu*. Of the several in Cholamandalam with the largest number of villages, the average size of the *nadu*, as suggested by Subbarayalu, was twenty-four square miles.[13] Ten *nadu*s of the 140 in Cholamandalam can definitely be assigned twenty villages or more, and all but one of these can be regarded as having been very well sited in relation to water.

TABLE III-2

Selected Large[a] and Populous[b] Cholamandalam *Nadu*s by Area, Villages and Relation to water supply

Name	Modern Location (District/Taluk)	Villages	Area[c] (sq. miles)	Relation to Major Water Source	
				Remote	Proximate
kilār-kūrram	Tanjavur, Papanasam	20	35		X
ārkāttu-kūrram	Tanjavur, Tanjore	24	36		X
pāchchil-kūrram	Tiruchirapalli, Lalgudi	20	45	X	
paṭṭana-kūrram	Tanjavur, Nagapattinam	30	56		X
tiruvalandūr nāḍu	Tanjavur, Mayuram	22	56		X
tirunaraiyūr-nāḍu	Tanjavur, Kumbakonam	28	60		X
purangaram-bai-nāḍu	Tanjavur, Mannargudi and Pattukkottai	27	75	X	
uraiyur-kūrram	Tiruchirapalli, Kulittalai	20	136	X	
urrāttūr-kūrram	Tiruchirapalli, Kulittalai and Kulattur	24	180	X	
valluvap-pādi-nāḍu	Tiruchirapalli, Musiri	40	200	X	

a. In excess of 35 sq. miles b. In excess of 20 villages c. Approximate

[12] Ibid., p. 22. [13] Ibid., pp. 21-2.

If the *nadu* territory and assembly were administrative institutions of the Cholas, as the conventional historical view and Subbarayalu contend, then it is important to recognize that this is an inference. No contemporary documents speak of the *nadu* in terms of the Chola governmental structure or function. On the contrary, these local units are referred to in donative inscriptions for the apparent purpose of better identifying a village or in recognition of the special prominence of the leading people of the *nadu* — *nāṭṭār* — in most donative transactions. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to suppose that when a locality — *nadu* or *kurram* — is first mentioned in an inscription that it is necessarily a newly created tract of settlement. There are, in fact,

TABLE III-3[a]

New *Nadus* [b](First References) in Cholamandalam and Naduvil-*Nadu:* A.D. 850–1300

Period	Cholamandalam	Naduvil-nadu
- 800	18	1
800- 850	0	3
850- 900	27	11
900- 950	27	6
950-1000	13	11
1000-1050[c.]	42	8
1050-1100	2	4
1100-1150	0	10
1150-1200	11	2
1200-1250	0	4
1250-1300	12	5
	Total 152	65

a. Based upon the table in Subbarayalu, op. cit., p. 20, with modifications for presentation.

b. Includes *nadus* and *kurrams*.

c. This is broken down accordingly to differentiate the reigns of Rajaraja I, (d. A.D. 1014) and his successors:

Period	Cholamandalam	Naduvil-nadu
1000-1014	36	4
1015-1050	6	4

few and questionable references[14] to the creation of a *nadu* or *kurram*, and the assumption that its first mention may be taken as the approximate date of its creation is a doubtful one. Subbarayalu makes this assumption in his discussion of the 'evolutionary character' of *nadus* and *kurrams*. He presents as evidence of 'new units', the first references to *nadus* and *kurrams* for Cholamandalam and Naduvil-nadu for the entire Chola period. On the basis of these 'first references', the following distribution occurs. Subbarayalu is led by this to suppose that:

> The density of population in the Chōḷa-Maṇḍalam had reached, for the optimum conditions prevailing then, its saturation point . . . in the first half of the 11th century, after which the rate of growth was obviously slow. In the Naḍuvil-nāḍu, however, new units were coming into existence at a faster rate till the middle of the 12th century, after which the rate was a bit slow.[15]

While it seems obvious that new agrarian tracts would soon open around the rich ecological cores such as the Kaveri and the southern Penner basins, the tempo of expansion suggested by Subbarayalu cannot be accepted without corroborative evidence of very impressive and sustained population growth or immigration. The large number of new agrarian tracts of irrigated agriculture, utilizing intensive labour, could not have been established without new population or restructuring of the field labour force or a basically new technology. There is no evidence of these.

It is more likely that new agrarian tracts were opened on the less fertile fringes of both Cholamandalam and Naduvil-nadu. Some of these were among the largest locality units of which we have records. These include: *valluvappādi-nāḍu* (Tiruchirapalli, Musiri taluk) with forty villages and areas of about 200 square miles; *uṛṛattūr-kūṛṛam* (Tiruchirapalli), with twenty-four villages and an area of about 180 square miles. Others like *kuṛunāgan-nāḍu, vēmbār-nāḍu,* and *kāṇakkiḷiyūr-nāḍu* were located on the western extremity of Cholamandalam; or, like *idaikkā-nāḍu* and *vāvelūr-nāḍu,* they were located in the relatively dry zones between such major streams as the Varahanadi (South Arcot, Tirukkoyilur taluk) or, like *tuṇḍa-nāḍu* and *viḷandaiyil-nāḍu* between the western portions of the northern Vellaru and the Murudaiyaru (Tiruchi-

[14] *A.R.E., 1943-4*, no. 277, where the epigraphist supposes a 'regrouping' of these *nadus*. Subbarayalu's reading of this record is different, op. cit., p. 44.

[15] Subbarayalu, op. cit., p. 21.

rapalli, Udaiyarpalayam taluk), or finally, *dānava-nāḍu*, around the upper reaches of the Ambuliyar river (Tanjavur, Pattukkottai taluk). Most of these tracts were isolated, large, and not very populous; these areas of later occupation may, as Subbarayalu has suggested, be the result of saturation densities in propinquitous and better endowed neighbouring territories.

Rather than viewed as an 'evolution' or as an unfolding of locality units as a result of 'saturation', it is proposed here that most of the 500 or so localities referred to in Chola times were in existence during the time of Rajaraja I, and the references to them indicate not a new existence, but a new recognition of Chola overlordship.

The assumption that locality units, variously called *nadu*s, *kurram*s, or, occasionally, by some other term, were in existence at the time of the 'Imperial Cholas' is one of the three possible assumptions which can be made. The prevailing conventional view of the *nadu* is based upon the supposition that the centralized state utilized, if it did not create, it as the prime unit of local administration. In this view, the term '*nadu*' is understood primarily in its meaning as a territorial assembly, not as a territory; it is the assembly which attended its governance as a territorial unit of administrative convenience. The *nadu*, as an assembly, is seen by Nilakanta Sastri as composed of some kind of regular representation from each village or locality,[16] or seen by Mahalingam as composed of the more 'influential' persons of a locality.[17] Both Nilakanta Sastri and Mahalingam tend to view the *nadu* assembly as a link in the overall control of the Chola government. This view rests on the unsubstantiated claim of the centralized, bureaucratized character of the Chola state; this view also neglects the agrarian and social basis of the locality territory as long antecedent to the political order established by the Cholas.

Subbarayalu, in a second possible position, recognizes the agrarian and social character of the *nadu*. However, in arguing that those of Cholamandalam and the Naduvil-nadu in most cases came into existence in the course of the Chola period, Subbarayalu is burdened by the undemonstrable assumption of impressive population increase such as to explain the establishment of 'new units' of agrarian organization leading to the

[16] *The Cōḷas*, p. 503-4.

[17] *South Indian Polity*, p. 369.

eventual 'saturation' of the Kaveri and the Penner basins. He also presumes a causal relationship between these developments and the Chola state. It is not possible to demonstrate that there was a 'Chola peace' which ended a period of disorder inimical to population growth or agrarian development nor that significant new forms of productive organization or techniques could have accounted for the development implied in Subbarayalu's formulation.

The third position, the one adopted here, is that most of the several hundred locality units of the Kaveri and Penner basins (Cholamandalam, Naduvil-nadu and Tondaimandalam) were in existence prior to Rajaraja I, and that these units as the prime units of social and agrarian organization provided the basis for the Chola political order. The nature of the Chola state is discussed separately in chapter VII but as that state was based upon an extant agrarian order, of which the *nadu* was the keystone, attention must be given to its essential character.

Much of our understanding of the persistence of territorially segmented units of culture and society in South India, of which the *nadu* was the major manifestation during the Chola period, must await deeper scholarship on the society depicted in Classical poetry and on the evidence of archaeology which in South India, as elsewhere on the Indian sub-continent, has barely begun.[18] These are the most promising frontiers of South Indian scholarship. Though tentative, an assessment of the features of South Indian territorial segmentation may be suggested.

The legacy of the ancient past of South India upon the segmentary territorial structure of medieval South Indian society and culture is manifold. Evidence of very early, widespread farming communities over most of the southern peninsula comes from neolithic and post-neolithic archaeology. While yet incomplete, this evidence strongly suggests that agricultural settlements dotted the various landscapes of the region, the more favourable riverine sites as well as less favoured upland ones. Moreover, it would appear that these early sites continued to be the *loci* of peasant settlement

[18] Two recent works deserve special mention here: S. Singaravelu, *Social Life of the Tamils*, Department of Indian Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1966, especially ch. 9, 'The Nātu'; and Clarence Maloney, 'Archaeology in South India: Accomplishments and Prospects', in *Essays on South India*, ed. Burton Stein, University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1975, ch. 1.

during the historical period. Further, at the time when the first states were being consolidated in the Gangetic plain, in the middle of the first millenium B.C., there were relatively stable though somewhat primitively formed, societies in the southern peninsula known to Gangetic peoples. Reference to the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyans as well as other peninsular peoples in the Asokan inscriptions mark this recognition around the fourth century B.C. Finally, in the Classical literature of the first several centuries of the present era, we are presented with a complex and sophisticated social order in which diverse peoples lived in trade settlements and engaged in an extensive trade network, including the Mediterranean region. At the same time, these cosmopolitan people shared a general culture with a variety of South India folk in quite different settings. As reflected in the cultural-ecological categories of the five regions, or poetic situations *(tiṇais)* of Tamil speakers, one sees many well-established variants of a single, general culture.

One other factor should be regarded as important with respect to territorial segmentation in the southern peninsula. The history of South India is quite clear on the matter of conquests by peoples of cultures different from those of the macro region. After the ancient incursions into the southern peninsula by Mediterranean peoples who comprise the basic Dravidian stock, there appear to have been no conquests of the southern peoples within the macro region of this study. There were neither the politico-military subjugations which might have obliterated ancient, local ethnic territories as known in Classical poems, for example, nor was there a 'cultural conquest' such as might achieve the same end. The introduction and dissemination of Aryan cultural forms — Sanskrit language and the Indo-Aryan culture of the Gangetic plain — appear to have been primarily the work of South Indian men. In a process which has been suggested by Kosambi and assumed, if not explicitly supported, in the work of most South Indian historians,[19] Indo-Aryan culture was assimilated by South Indians gradually and selectively. There was no sudden transformation of Dravidian culture — if one may use such a term — by strangers, but rather slow, quite varied, and modest variations

[19] D.D. Kosambi, 'The Basis of Ancient Indian History, I', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 75, no. 1 (Jan.-March, 1955), p. 43. A valuable, recent consideration of this matter comes from Nilakanta Sastri, *Cultural Contacts Between Aryans and Dravidians*, Manaktala, Bombay, 1967.

in an already rich Dravidian culture through interactions with carriers of Indo-Aryan culture, many of whom may themselves be called 'Dravidian' in language, culture, and social allegiance.

The result of these factors was a South Indian cultural system based upon highly localized, very durable varieties of a single, extensive culture, a related set of languages, and substantially shared cultural traditions. The robustness of the Dravidian component is evident in modern times as it has been throughout history. The impact of early Indo-Aryan forms, Muslim influences during the medieval period, and, finally, European influence since the eighteenth century have not obliterated the Dravidian foundation of South Indian life. And it may well be that the segmentary character of that society and culture served to preserve and protect that foundation.

The salient dimensions of segmentary organization in early South India were restricted marriage and kinship networks; narrow territorial social coalitions beyond kinsmen; and locally-based agrarian relationships, political and religious affiliations and loyalties.

The distinctive cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece forms of marriage apparently have been preferred from the beginning to the period under examination here. Unfortunately, this proposition is difficult to assert with complete confidence because information relating to marriage arrangements is surprisingly sparse in the early, didactic literature of Tamils, and they are nonexistent in the inscriptions except as marriages facilitated political alliances.[20] However, according to the eleventh century commentary of Vijnanesvara on the *Yajnavalkya Smriti,* cross-cousin marriages were recognized as appropriate in South India even though disapproved in the general body of medieval *dharmaśāstra,*[21]

[20] Noted by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Culture and History of the Tamils,* p. 83, who has been among the few historians to have consistently denigrated the literary sources of this period as too fanciful and didactic and difficult to date to be reliable. See his, *Sources of Indian History,* pp. 55-6.

[21] D.K. Karandikar, *Extracts from the Yajnavalkya Smriti,* Bombay Vaibhav Press, Bombay, 1913, p. ii. Marriage with one's maternal uncle's daughter is also allowed by the northern commentator on Manu, Govindaraja, of about the same time (Kane, op. cit., I, pp. 313-15). Earlier references to the latter may be found in Baudhayana (possibly a southerner of *c.* 500-200 B.C. according to Kane, ibid., pp. 27-30); G. Bühler, *The Sacred Books of the Aryas as Taught in the Schools of Apastamba, Gautama, Vaishtha, and Baudhayana,* v. 14, pt II, *Sacred Books of the East,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1965, p. 146.

and, in the Jain Tamil classic, the *Civakacintamani,* of a possibly earlier date, one of the marriages of the hero, Civakan, was with the daughter of his maternal uncle, in which the latter recognized the hero's preferential claim to his daughter.[22]

The spatially compressing character of the marriage system existed among the dominant, land-controlling peasantry as well as among most other locality social groups. In part this reflected a sharing of marriage norms from which no group, including Brahmans, was exempt; but, more, it was a concomitant of coalitions which exist in any society dominated by peasant agrarian relationships. In the absence of effective, continuous, extra-local, non-peasant authority over agrarian relationships and over the distributions of the products of the land, it was only through secure relationships with those local groups which controlled the land that benefits could be obtained by groups without such control. The superior privileges and common interests of the dominant peasant groups — which may at the beginning have consisted of diverse ethnic segments — would have produced a cohesive, endogamous locality group.[23] Similarly, among those dependent upon the dominant locality peasantry, endogamous links were formed based upon common or related occupations, or they would form coalitions with those with whom marriage relations were not feasible. Where, as in most Coromandel localities, direct management of the land and effective political authority were combined in the same group, other locality groups developed closed and separate corporate identities.

Territorially segmented marriage and kinship systems were supported by caste principles of hierarchy and purity as these principles may be identified in medieval South India. References to castes as they are known to modern Indian sociology are rare. Suresh, in his study of Chola inscriptions, noted the names of over 1,800 persons, not including officials and women of chieftains' families, mentioned in temple inscriptions. These persons included women connected with the temple and other women donors, male donors, temple staff, and Brahmans. Of this large number,

[22] T.E. Gnanamurthy, *A Critical Study of the Cīvakacintāmani,* Kalai Kathir, Coimbatore, 1966, p. 209.

[23] Localized connubial systems can and have been maintained in ways other than those found in South India, of course; the widespread preference rules found there are therefore not 'explained' here, merely noted.

only Brahmans and about twenty other individuals are identified by 'caste' and, of these, eighteen are either Vellala or *seṭṭi,* meaning 'agriculturists' and 'merchants' of respectable standing. Suresh concluded that the near total absence of caste designations for those other than Brahmans named in these temple records indicates that 'the caste system had not yet set'.[24] This is a quite unnecessary conclusion.

For most Brahmans mentioned in the inscriptions studied by Suresh and others, *gotra* designations are provided. However in all cases, the village in the locality of the temple from whose inscriptions the names of persons come — whether Brahmans or others — is provided. It would therefore appear that for purposes of the public recording which temple inscriptions served, the two essential elements of information necessary for the identification of persons were whether they were Brahmans and where they lived. It is reasonable to assume that the persons mentioned who were not Brahmans belonged to respectable social groups, for, presumably only those persons could be suitable participants in the canonical temples. Thus, the list of names provided by Suresh would include the two most prestigious social groups in South Indian society at the time: Brahmans and respectable non-Brahmans along with the information of where they lived. To say that the caste system was not set, as Suresh does, may not therefore be altogether true, for what is suggested from his data and that of others is that the tripartite division of territorially segmented social groups in South Indian society — the dominant structural element in modern South Indian caste — was already well-established and recognized. In temple inscriptions of the age it was sufficient to give the proper name of non-Brahmans along with his village to say all that was necessary about caste.

While the division of social groups according to the *varṇa* schema of vedic authority has had little sociological reality anywhere in the Indian cultural sphere, its categories (the four *varṇa*s plus untouchables) appear to have provided clearer status categories in northern India, particularly the Gangetic plain, than in South India. In the tripartite division of peoples in South India, the most ambiguous division was the middle one. Certainty about the appropriateness of a prospective marriage would have been greatest to attain within the middle caste ranks of dominant

[24] Suresh, *HCGESI,* p. 315.

peasants where concerns about relative status were perhaps most keenly felt. Marriage among near kin sought to assure this appropriateness. Beyond that, participation with Brahmans in the support and operation of the canonical temple, as representatives of the locally dominant people, further supported their status pretentions.

Peasant controllers of localities sought in their marriage system and in their conspicuous association with Brahmans and canonical religion to fix for themselves a status second only to the indisputably high rank of Brahmans. Other social groups, identified primarily by their occupations (and the relation of these occupations to agrarian production) held ranked places below that of the dominant peasant castes, thus fortifying the latter's political and economic position. The periodically activated coalitions of the right- and left-hand castes among occupational/social groups below the dominant land controllers which came into prominence by the late eleventh century, served as a means for some lower peasant groups and more mobile artisan-traders to combine across locality lines, against the dominance enjoyed by the powerful land-controlling peasantry, their dependents, and their allies, the Brahmans.

Requirements of the agrarian organization, given the technology of the age, made for territorially segmented units of production. The *nadu* was thus an economic as well as ethnic territory. Boundaries of each territorial unit were defined by interactions between the dominant landed folk and those dependent upon them — artisans, merchants, and labourers — as well as with Brahmans with whom the peasant groups were allied.

The earliest peasant settlements of the *nadu* usually gave their names to the locality. The other major source of names, besides the village toponym, stressed natural elements directly related to agriculture. Thus, *manni-nāḍu* in Kumbakonam taluk, modern Thanjavur, is named after the Manniyar River, and *iḍaiyāṛṛu-nāḍu*, also Cholamandalam, is the same as the term *'doab'* in North Indian usage, the land between two rivers; *pulalerikki-nāḍu* and *ambattūr-ērī-nāḍu*, in Tondaimandalam, are named after the prominence of a great lake or tank as *mēlmalai-vēlūr-nāḍu* refers to a prominent hill. Those well-watered, fertile tracts which attracted agriculturists to particular localities in the first instance remained the inner cores of each *nadu*. Here were the chief settle-

ments of those whose efforts had won the place from previous occupants — forest people or pastoralists, who settled and cultivated the land, and who recruited groups of service providers — including Brahmans. In time, subordinate settlements were created in other parts of the tract by these peasant settlers and those associated with them, extending the arrangements evolved in the earliest settlements with which newer ones were bound by marriage ties, cult practices, defensive arrangements, allegiances to supra-local chieftains, and common interests in the management of land relations.

An interesting aspect of the relationship of 'founding' villages and their localities is that the earliest settlements after which localities were often named assumed no apparent primacy among locality villages, either as administrative centres or as fortified places. It was rather the locality as a whole and the dominant peasant groups within them — referred to collectively and acting corporately as **the** *nattar* — and dispersed throughout the locality that was considered as important. In public terms, as reflected in the inscriptional records, large Brahman settlements and important trade centres enjoyed more prominence than even the largest, essentially peasant, settlement of a locality.

The network of rural relationships which emerged in a *nadu* territory was conditioned by many factors. Land was one such factor. The proliferation and viability of colonies of the parent peasant settlement depended critically upon the availability of arable land. But nature could be moulded to the needs of peasant cultivation; irrigation works could be developed to reduce the hazards of aridity and wells could tap rising water tables resulting from the careful husbanding of water in the vicinity. The relative availability of men and animals to work the land also operated as a determinant of expansion of peasant settlements and both of these factors would be influenced by such short-term phenomena as war and disease, as well as long term ones like endemic health conditions hazardous to both man and beast. Able leadership and warriors among a peasant folk could facilitate rapid expansion just as proximity to well-organized tribal folk in the forests — predators upon wealthy peasant settlements — could retard, even reverse, the development of a peasant micro region.

It is recognized that the designation of the *nadu*, an ethnic and ecological micro region, as the basic unit of Chola society

diverges from the emphasis which is usually given to the 'village' by most scholars. In the judgement of most historians, the *nadu* is vaguely seen as an administrative unit with a certain degree of responsibility over self-governing villages. Thus Nilakanta Sastri states: 'The self governing village was the unit of government. A number of them constituted a *kūrram* or *nāḍu* or *kōṭṭam* as it is called in different parts of the country.'[25]

The word, 'constituted', which may or may not have been used deliberately to denote the *nadu* as an arbitrarily defined space of administrative convenience, well expresses the propensity of scholars to disregard the sociological significance of the micro region.[26]

Emphasis upon the primacy of the 'self-governing village' and the 'constituted' character of the *nadu* is questionable on at least two grounds. First, the kind of 'self governing villages' to which reference is made, and for which alone there is evidence, is the Brahman village, and such villages were, in almost all cases, already thriving peasant settlements before being conferred as *brahmadeya*s. Indeed, if they were not prosperous villages, then they could hardly have supported the non-productive Brahman population and could hardly have been considered gifts.[27] To the extent that it is possible to speak of village self-government, it is widely recognized that the non-Brahman assembly, the *ūr*, was probably as competent as *sabhā* of the *brahmadeya*, though less is known of it, unfortunately. In general there is little information on the functioning of any village assemblies prior to the ninth century when inscriptional evidence becomes vastly richer and riveted attention upon the very conspicuous Brahman villages.[28]

[25] *The Cōḷas*, p. 465.

[26] K.A.N. Sastri, the most scholarly, prolific, and authoritative writer on Chola history has persistently held to the constitutive view of the *nadu;* in his recent work, *Sources of Indian History: with special Reference to South India* (Heras Memorial Lectures (1961), Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1964, p. 68), he writes, 'they [Rajaraja I and Rajendra I] perfected a highly organized administrative system which admirably hit the mean between centralization and local autonomy...'.

[27] In other times and places, Brahman-and-temple-sponsored schemes of agricultural development occurred, but there is no evidence of this in the period under discussion. See, for Bengal, *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India*, ed. D.C. Sircar, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1966, p. 15; for South India, Burton Stein, 'Temples and Agriculture Development in Medieval South India', *Economic Weekly Annual*, Bombay, 1960.

[28] Among the best of which is K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies in Cōḷa History*

Secondly, the *nadu*, or micro region, far from being an administrative device of the Cholas, existed long before as an important unit of society and culture as well as politics.

Some of the macro regions of the Chola period existed during the Classical period.[29] The Classical poetic canon, *Tolkappiyam*, distinguishes twelve dialectical sub-regions among Tamils in the southernmost part of what was then formally regarded as Tamil country (*tamilaham*).[30] These Tamil dialects are differentiated from the Tamil spoken north of the Kaveri — the 'northern language' (*vaḍa-col*) — which were regarded as unfit to be included as 'correct' (*sentamil*) on phonetic grounds. Centreing on Madurai, where the language was considered most correct, the formal linguistic region, Tamilaham, extended from Kanya Kumari northward on the Malabar Coast to about twelve degrees of latitude and on the Coromandel coast to the thirteenth degree of north latitude. The Vengadam Hills marked the northern boundary of Tamil speakers according to most Classical sources.[31]

Several of the *nadu*s of the Classical period persisted as distinctive localities until quite recent times. Two on the west coast, *pōli-nāḍu* and *kuda-nāḍu* are known until the conquest by Mysore in the late eighteenth century when their names were slightly altered to Polanad and Kutnad as which they continue to constitute sub-divisions of modern divisions.[32] On the Coromandel coast, the

and Administration, University of Madras, Madras, 1932; but also in such survey works as R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India,* S.N. Sen, Calcutta, 1922, and R.K. Mukherjee, *Local Government in Ancient India,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1919.

29 Note the extended entry under the term *nāḍu* in Subrahamanian, *Pre-Pallavan Index,* p. 488-9.

30 S. Illakkuvanar, *Tholkāppiyam in English; with Critical Studies*, Kural Neri Publishing House, Madura, 1963, p. 142.

31 Regions by dialect are listed in Srinivasa Iyengar, op. cit., pp. 150-1; in this period, Tamil dialect territories included those on the west coast, in what is now Kerala. From twelve degress of north latitude these included *Pōlināḍu, Kudanāḍu,* and *Venāḍu,* the last of which continued to be an important Tamil region, Kanakasabhai, op. cit., pp. 14-15. According to K.K. Pillay, this broad delineation of the Tamil region of antiquity is referred to in several other classical works as well as the *Tolkappiyam* (where it is found in the *pāyiram,* or laudatory preface): the *Puranānūru, Ahanānūru,* and *Cilapadikāram; A Social History of the Tamils,* pt 1, University of Madras, Madras, 1969, pp. 14-15.

32 William Logan, *Malabar: The Malabar Manual,* Superintendent of Government Press, Madras [reprinted], 1951, v. 1, pp. 645 and 662.

following ancient *nadu*s continued to the Chola period: *aruvānāḍu*,[33] and *ōyma-nāḍu*,[34] in Tondaimandalam (Chola: *jayangoṇḍachōḷa-maṇḍalam*), and *kōnāḍu* in Cholamandalam.[35] *Mala-nāḍu* (malai-*nāḍu*) between Cholamandalam and Kongumandalam, dates from the Classical age and during the Chola period was designated as a special link region called *rājaśraya-vaḷanāḍu*.[36] *Maḷāḍu* (or *milāḍu*), in modern Tirukkoyilur taluk of South Arcot, continued as a named locality until at least the late years of the reign of Rajendra Chola I, and it is one of the few Coromandel localities to which a numerical designation was appended in the manner of medieval Karnataka (*milāḍu*, '2,000').[37]

The *nadu*s of Gangavadi in southern Karnataka predated the Hoysala state by perhaps two centuries. These may date from the first kingdom to be centred in this region, the Gangas, whose territory encompassed most of what was the princely state of Mysore during the nineteenth century. Gangavadi was distinguished in medieval inscriptions from northern Karnataka. The latter, being called *kuntaḷa* or *rattavāḍi*, included the extensive tracts of *nolambavāḍi*, *banavāsi*, and *palasige*. As with all territories in medieval Karnataka, from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries, a numerical designation was affixed to these: Gangavadi-96,000, *nolambavāḍi*-32,000, *banavāsi*-12,000, and *palasige*-12,000.[38] Gangavadi was clearly linked to the interior upland of Tamil country as evidenced by the large number of Tamil inscriptions there and by the movement of peasant folk between Gangavadi and neighbouring extensions of the Tamil plain as recalled in the *Kārmaṇḍala Śatakam* of the eighteenth century.[39]

[33] Subrahmanian, *Pre-Pallavan Index*, p. 56. Ptolemy in the second century A.D. noted the territory between the north and south Penner as 'Arvrērnoi'; K.V. Raman, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

[34] Subrahmanian, *Pre-Pallavan Index*, p. 187.

[35] Ibid., p. 346; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 109; V. Venkayya, 'Territorial Divisions of Rājarāja Chola', *S.I.I.*, v. 2, pt 5, pp. 21-9.

[36] K.S. Vaidyanathan, 'Mala-Nadu', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, 'Culture and Heritage Number' (1956), p. 225.

[37] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, 265-6. Another is *vaḍugavaḷi*-12,000 in modern North Arcot, *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no. 42, p. 90, late ninth century.

[38] G.S. Dikshit, *Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka*, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1964, pp. 18-19.

[39] *Kārmaṇḍala-Śatakam* (in Tamil) with a commentary by P.A. Muthuthandavaraya Pillay, Madras, 1930.

It may therefore be argued that if there was a 'basic unit of government', it was the *nadu*, not the 'self-governing village'. The *nadu* was the basic peasant unit of the age, it was also an ethnic region to which the later, prestigious Brahman villages and the great overlords adapted themselves. The essential governmental significance of the *nadu* was its ethnic coherence. All persons and groups directly involved in the peasant agrarian system of a locality and jointly dependent upon the successful exploitation of the land tended to constitute a discrete social universe. Where land capable of being turned to the plough ceased, where slope, aridity, hazards to human or animal welfare, or the presence of a hostile people — peasant or non-peasant — who could not be displaced occurred, the locality ended. Within that spatial universe, in most parts of the macro region, those with sufficient authority to compel it forced the acceptance of social rules based upon hereditary hierarchy and segmentation. Those whose military power and agricultural skills had originally converted a tract of land to peasant cultivation maintained authority through control over cultivable land and through connections with supra-local chieftains.

In some parts of the macro region — its backwaters, late to emerge as full-fledged peasant tracts — the relationships between a particular ethnic group and the territory was perhaps stronger than in the older peasant core areas, for example, southern Pandimandalam as compared with the riverine portion of Cholamandalam or Tondaimandalam. Where such emergence was late, clan organization could assume great importance. This is well exemplified in the cases of the Kallars and Maravars in the southern peninsula.

The modern districts of Ramnad and Madurai became marginal extensions of ancient Pandya country as Kallars and Maravars progressively converted their lands to peasant agriculture, possibly during later Chola times. Subsequently, they expanded their control into portions of modern Tanjavur and Tirunelveli, becoming the territorially dominant people in some portions of Tanjavur which they ruled as their 'eighteen *nadus*'. In both places, however, the original Ramand and Madurai 'homeland' and the places into which they later migrated, Kallars and Maravars permitted strangers, including higher status ones like Brahmans and Vellalas, to maintain their corporate character while superior locality

control was retained by Kallars and Maravars.[40] According to the Census of 1901, Kallars were divided into ten major endogamous divisions by territory (*nāḍu*). During the nineteenth century, within each of the Kallar localities, one Kallar sub-division was accorded the title of *nattar* and assumed a dominant place in the affairs of the place involving not only all Kallars, but problems involving other castes as well.[41] Maravars, it appears, followed the same pattern.

Locality governance varied in the Chola macro region. In the central portion of the Kaveri basin and Tondaimandalam, the *nattar* seemed to operate as an assembly without a single, local, executive chief, whereas is southern Karnataka and Kongu[42]— the interior, upland tracts of the macro region — *nadu* chieftainships prevailed. In Karnatak inscriptions, local political relations revolved around locality chiefs. Here, men with titles of *gāuṇḍa*, *prabbu*, and *pergade* to which are prefixed the word *nād* were recognized holders of locality authority with specified prerequisites of dues and land. These were hereditary offices, and those who held the offices were 'ranked chiefs'.[43]

The dispersed settlement of peasants in the relatively dry interior upland of South India would have required greater reliance upon highly localized chiefs for protection. Moreover, in both Kongu and Southern Karnataka, there was evidence of conquest by peasant groups from the Tamil plain which established a locality-conquering élite unlike any that can be identified in the lowland during Chola times. Arokiaswami, writing of Kongu country during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, has pointed to the

[40] William Taylor, 'Marava-Jathi-Vernanam' from Unpublished Mackenzie Manuscripts in Possession of the Asiatic Department of the Madras Literary Society, *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, v. 4 (1836), p. 357.

[41] Thurston, op. cit., v. 3, pp. 71ff. citing J.H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual*, Asylum Press, Madras, 1868. More recent corroboration of this comes from Louis Dumont's study of a branch of the Kallars, *Une Sous Caste de l'Inde du Sud* (Mouton, Paris, 1957, pp. 143ff) where he describes the conventional structure of four chiefs (*tēvar*), eight districts *(nāḍus)* and twenty-four subordinate villages in which one of the four chiefs is recognized as superior (raja) over others who are regarded as his 'ministers'.

[42] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, pp. 251-2, 261-2, 271.

[43] Dikshit, op. cit., pp. 38-40. 'Ranked' chiefs are distinguished from 'ceremonial' chiefs by their possession of preferential access to or control over human and non-human resources, implying a stratified difference from the essentially honourary office of chief.

heavy influx of plains groups into the region which resulted in segmentary relationships between the 'foreign' lowland intruders and those who exercised local authority previously. These latter linked caste groups, according to Arokiaswami's argument, identified themselves in and with the place by the prefix 'Kongu-' which also emphasized their indigenous status.[44]

In the riverine plains of the lowland, however, the pattern of local authority and control continued to be corporate until the Vijayanagara period. Collective terms such as, *nāḍāyiśāinda nāṭṭōm*, which Nilakanta Sastri translates as, '. . . residents of the *nāḍu* met [formed] as *ṇādu*. . .'[45] refer to those who manage the locality through specialists.

Two kinds of administrative functions are prominent in records which refer to the management of more densely settled, lowland localities. These are maintenance of local accounts (*nāḍu-kaṇkāṇi*), revenue registers and assessments (*nāḍu-vagai* and *nāḍu kūṟu*).[46] General attention was also increasingly given by the *nattar* to temple management where the official *nāḍu-kaṇkāṇi* supervised temple accounts and income derived from lands which had been granted by persons of the locality as *dēvadāna* ('gift to the god').[47]

Whereas locality leadership in more isolated parts of the macro region, as Karnataka, vested hereditary chiefs with considerable authority and power based upon the dominant peasantry to which they belonged, leadership in the more densely settled, ethnically diverse, and wealthy parts of the plain is more difficult to identify. Here, the public actions of the *nattar* spokesmen for the dominant peasantry of the locality are undertaken corporately. Revenue and registerial functions within each locality were the work of agents of the *nattar*. If one is to try to locate a kind of executive authority in the more populous, diverse, and wealthy localities of the macro region, the most promising possibilities appear to be persons designated by such titles as *mūvēnda-vēḷār* and *mummaḍi*.

[44] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, pp. 270-1. What Arokiaswami discussed as 'social stratification' (p. 271) is better labelled 'social segmentation' since distinctions among later 'invasions' of Kongu do not appear to be of a ranked sort; these were merely different groups of equal rank.

[45] *The Cōḷas*, p. 503.

[46] Subbarayalu, op. cit., p. 42.

[47] Ibid., pp. 43-4.

Little attention has been given to the precise meanings of titles in Chola inscriptions and such ideas which are held relating to functions carried out by persons using titles are wholly conjectural. Arokiaswami published a brief note on the term *mūvēndavēḷār*, which he called, 'a curious title'.[48] 'Curious' it is, as it has been used by historians, and Arokiaswami was referring to the usage by Nilakanta Sastri. The titles *adigāri* and *mūvēndavēḷār* are examined by the latter in a lengthy paragraph dealing with 'officials in the service of the king'. In this discussion, such ancient honorific titles as *ēnādi* and *mārāyan* and the titles of chiefs and leading men (*araiyan* and *pēraraiyan*) are included.[49] The examples provided by Nilakanta Sastri fail to convince that these are 'Officials' in the sense implied by his interpretation of the Chola state as centralized and bureaucratized. Thus, examples of 'civic occupations' of officials are *kaḍigaimārāyan* and *vācciya-mārāyan*, which mean, respectively, 'palace-bard' or 'time-keeper' and 'palace musician'.[50] As for the title *adigāri*,[51] which Nilakanta Sastri and others regard as 'high officers of the army and in general administration', again, in the presumed framework of a centralized political structure, it is noted that the title is often used without personal names, but very often with a place reference. Of these 'officials', Nilakanta Sastri cites a 'quaint account' of a later medieval commentator on a religious text who wrote:

> Members of these [*adigāri*] families only accepted appointments as *mantris* and did no other work. It is an improper thing that they are found holding positions of accountants in these days; except that they could not wear a crown, they are entitled to all the other insignia of royalty, and it is improper for them to accept any positions other than those of *mantris*.[52]

[48] 'The Inscriptional Term, "Muvendavelan"' *J.I.H.* (April 1956), p. 191. See also the recent preliminary work by N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, 'A Statistical Study of Personal Names in Tamil Inscriptions; Interim Report II', *Computational Analysis of Asian and African Languages*, ed. M.J. Hashimoto, no. 3 (March, 1976), National Research Institute of Asian and African Languages and Culture, Tokyo, pp. 9-20. Definitions are not considered in this work.

[49] *The Cōḷas*, pp. 462-4. Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 173-4, notes eighty references to these terms which he equates with raja or 'king'.

[50] *The Cōḷas*, p. 483, no. 61 and *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 668, on *kaṭikai*. *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 3576 on *vācciya-mārāyan*.

[51] *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 73.

[52] *The Cōḷas*, p. 463. Nilakanta Sastri notes that the gloss on this work, *Takkayapparani*, was written some centuries after the period of the Cholas.

The term *mantri* is significant here because it relates to the role of the king's advisor or counsellor, not a subordinate office-holder in the bureaucratic sense.[53] Similarly, while *adigāri* is used to refer to a 'director' or 'head person', it is in the sense of a person of personal merit, not official precedence.[54]

Mūvēndavēḷār is a term frequently used in Chola inscriptions. It is often joined with the term *adigāri* to designate an important personage, often without his personal name. Arokiaswami's understanding of the term is like that of Nilakanta Sastri: it connotes people with experience in 'high administrative jobs', where 'job' is meant to convey a bureaucratic office.[55] *Mūvendavēḷār* is a phrase which appears to mean: Vellalas (*vēḷār*) of three (*mū*) kings (*vēndan*).[56] Arokiaswami has provided some instances of Vellalas serving the Cholas and their predecessors which support the association suggested by the term *vēḷār* in the title.[57] Again, as in *adigāri*, persons with this title appear less as occupying functional political roles than as possessing an esteemed status, the importance which attaches to men who serve kings as full agents of the ruler's authority.

Persons with the titles mentioned above are frequently not identified by their personal names, yet their locality or village is often given. Nilakanta Sastri's understanding of place, in preference to personal, identifications is consistent with his general notions about the Chola state: he sees the reference as indicating the place from which a royal officer derives his salary; he sees it as a kind of fief, or livelihood (*jīvita*), which might include a village or a 'district' (*nāḍu*).[58] There is absolutely no evidence of such prebends, or assignments of village or *nadu* income, in Chola times, and an arrangement of this sort would seriously have weakened the putative central control ascribed to Chola rulers. Another, and more convincing explanation of the place designation, is that the personage bearing the title was, in fact, a notable of the place mentioned in his title, that such persons were not royal officials or central officers as purported, but locality chiefs.

[53] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 785.
[54] *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 73.
[55] Arokiaswami, 'The Inscriptional Term "Muvendavelar"', p. 191.
[56] *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 3834, *vēntan* and p. 3843, *vēḷān*.
[57] Arokiaswami, 'The Inscriptional Term "Muvendavelar"', p. 192.
[58] *The Cōḷas*, p. 464.

This suggestion is supported by the data which Suresh has collected. Though his understanding of *mūvēndavēḷār* conforms closely to the conventional one, Suresh undertakes a closer study of the term.[59] Forty-nine references to *mūvēndavēḷār* are cited by him from a list of 449 'officers' culled from the corpus of Chola inscriptions he examined. For almost every one of these 449 men, the place of the person is clearly recorded in the inscription along with a title like *mūvēndavēḷār*[60] or *brahmarāyan*, the latter indicating a Brahman notable.[61] In the cases of non-Brahman notables, a personage with the attributes of a chief was reliably indicated by the suffixes: *uḍaiyar*, *āl̲vār*, or *āraiyan*. Suresh also notes that another standard term affixed to the names of notables, *mummaḍi* was equivalent to *mūvēndavēḷār*.[62] In the title *mummaḍi-chōḷa iḷangō vēḷ* reference is to a 'chief' or 'king' of the Iḷangō lineage which flourished in the Kaveri basin for a long time.[63] *Mummaḍi*, or more properly *mummuḍi*, thus, appears to be another way of referring to the 'three kings',[64] either in the sense that the Cholas had become dominant over the territories of the three ancient peoples — Cholas, Cheras, and Pandyas — but more likely in the sense that the holder of the title was a local notable recognizing the sovereignty of kings.

These titles were held by chieftains' families of long standing, not by persons whose status derived from the officialdom of the Chola state. True, some great families of chiefs continued to be referred to in inscriptions, thus, preserving an ancient identity. They are described as an 'aristocracy' by Suresh and included great families of chiefs (*pērāraiyar*) whose existence is attested during the Classical period. Tondaiman chiefs probably originated in Tondaimandalam,[65] but their territorial power in the Kaveri basin was well-established in villages (*ur*s in which they were the principal people (*kiḻār*). Maravar chiefs, similarly carrying the title of *āraiyar*, remained important at least until the time of

[59] Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 230-1.

[60] Explained, ibid., p. 227.

[61] Explained, ibid., p. 182.

[62] Ibid., p. 227.

[63] Ibid., pp. 194-5.

[64] Ibid., p. 227; *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 3272.

[65] The *Perumpāṇār̲ruppaṭai* of perhaps the second or third century celebrates the chieftain Tondaiman Ilantiraiyan of Kanchi: K. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan; On Tamil Literature of South India*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1973, pp. 56-7.

Kulottunga III; they appear less as a kin-linked ruling group in the arid country south of the Kaveri than as an assortment of ruling families originating from various parts of the macro region who found opportunities on the southern Chola frontier. Among the Maravar chiefs were the Ilangovels, referred to above, who enjoyed a somewhat special relationship with the Cholas through marriage. Kadavarayans, a chieftain's family of modern Tanjavur district, were also identified as Maravars though they also appear to have been linked to another ancient chief's family, the Muttaraiyars of the relatively arid tracts north of the Kaveri, in modern South Arcot. Other families of chiefs of antiquity who are prominent during the Chola period include: Banas, Irukkuvels, Kaduppattigals, Sengenis, and Tamilavels. Additional great chieftains' families were apparently Valavadaraiyans, Tennavans, and those called Pallavans or Pallavaraiyans who may also have been warriors from Tondaimandalam originally, though this is unclear.[66]

The prominence of these ancient chieftains' families is marked by the frequency with which they were mentioned in Chola inscriptions, the titles which they bore, the villages and localities with which they were associated as principal people, and finally, the practice of including Chola royal titles (e.g., *edirilichōḷa* or *vikramachōḷa*) or the names of the Chola rulers in their own titles. Suresh interprets the last practice as a sign of matrimonial relations between 'aristocratic' families and the royal family;[67] he also supposes that there were matrimonial relations among these 'aristocratic' families.[68]

A good example of the use of Chola royal names by quite independent chiefs comes from the interior upland of Kongu (modern Salem and Coimbatore districts). A line of rulers of this territory, called the 'Kongu-Cholas' is regarded as a 'vice-royalty' of the Kaveri Cholas by Arokiaswami.[69] The Kongu-Cholas ruled from the beginning of the eleventh to the late thirteenth century. Most of the rulers in this line bore Chola regnal names, such as Uttamachola (A.D. 1100-1119), Virachola (A.D. 1119-1134), and Vira

[66] Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 301-8. Some of these families were prominent in Pallava times; see M.S. Govindasamy, *The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History*, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1965.

[67] Suresh, *HCGESI*, p. 302.

[68] Ibid., p. 309.

[69] *Kongu Country*, pp. 229-48.

Rajendra (A.D. 1207-1249). While claiming the great territory of *koṅgudēśa*, most of the 300 inscriptions of this line of chiefs were concentrated in two places: Dharapuram in the southern portion of modern Coimbatore and Avanashi in the central portion. Both places seemed to be on an ancient road from the Kaveri basin to Malabar over the Nilgiri Hills, and the progenitors of this line of chiefs may have been Irukkuvels who migrated from the southern bank of the Kaveri during the Chola period.[70] It may also have been true that the Irukkuvels were linked in marriage to the great Cholas, but the independent career of the Kongu-Chola chiefs is too clear to regard them as actual viceregal deputies of the great Cholas.

Political alliances involving marriages among families of chiefs and between them and the Chola ruling family certainly did occur judging from the pedigree of some of the Chola queens. However, the argument that the use of a Chola royal title or name of a Chola ruler in the title of a chief is a sign of matrimonial relations is questionable. Such titles seem to have been used frequently among even quite minor chieftains' families noted among the 449 names of 'officers' by Suresh.[71] Unless it is to be argued that every local notable — a person claiming the title of chief, and claiming *kīḻvar* status with respect to a locality and using the title or name of ruler — was actually tied to the Chola ruling family by marriage relations, the practice must be explained some other way. What is suggested in the evidence available is that the royal Chola family exercised a *ritual sovereignty* over the numerous locality notables in the plains and neighbouring upland; one expression of this sovereignty was the adoption of Chola royal names and titles by local chiefs.

As in the case of the great families of chiefs referred to above, it must have been the case that most minor families of chiefs existed before Rajaraja I's time. There is no suggestion in the evidence of the Chola period or in the interpretations of modern historians that either the great families of chiefs or minor chieftains were eliminated by the Cholas; thus, the only reasonable position which can be taken is that they continued to exist. In relatively isolated portions of the plain — tracts less favourably situated for dense

[70] Ibid, pp. 241-2. Also see, K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Seven Vatteluttu Inscriptions from the Kongu Country', *E.I.*, v. 30, no. 19, p. 100.

[71] Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 427-6.

settlements — older families of chiefs as most of those noted above continued to hold sway, preserving their ancient family identities even as they assumed additional titles linking them to the Cholas. In those more populous tracts, well favoured by irrigation and consisting of quite diverse ethnic groups, the dominant peasantry continued as before to exercise control through their chiefs. However, as in the case of the more ancient families of chiefs, the identity of these local chiefs — spokesmen for the *nattar* of the locality — also changed to reflect a powerful new and politically able overlordship, that of the Cholas.

The titles which appear to mark off older locality chiefs in more densely settled, pluralistic localities were *mūvēndavēḷār* and *mummaḍi*. References to the Chola hegemony in the titles of these notables are not to political subordination, for the power of the *nattar* and their chiefs seems to have continued undiminished. The titles, rather, point to a formal allegiance to, and a ritual linkage with, the Cholas by locality authorities whose power was based upon their ties with local, dominant peasantry from which they themselves originated.

Shared sacral allegiance was another significant dimension of the territorially segmented society of South India during medieval times. The responsibility of the locally dominant *nattar* for the maintenance and supervision of shrines was vested in officials (*nāyagam*) of the *nadu* assembly. The *nattar* of a locality in which a Brahman settlement was established were clearly the most important of the several groups which participated in the ceremonial events marking such foundations. But what is most interesting about the relationship of religion and the territorially and socially segmented society of this age is the interaction of localized forms of folk religion and canonical religion, and these with the Chola state. This is considered in chapter VII.

Seen as micro regions of overlapping distributions of marriage and kinship networks, social coalitions beyond kinsmen, agrarian relations, political and religious affiliations, the *nadu*s of the South Indian macro region varied greatly. In most parts of the Kaveri and Palar basins — Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam — *nadu*s were complex societies consisting of relatively large populations, considerable wealth, and diverse social groupings living in numerous, pluralistic settlements. In more remote upland portions of the macro region or in the less-favoured ecological settings of

parts of the Tamil plain, a simpler model may be considered, such as that presented by the anthropologist F.G. Bailey.

In his work on a part of the modern peasantry of Orissa, Bailey has used the concept of 'clan' to analyse relations between peasant lineages and the territory they jointly occupy even though there is no actual descent group which can be called a 'clan' in the classical sense of that term. This putative 'clan' structure appears as a means for associating a diverse set of lineage groups with a particular portion of land. It provides an important element in Bailey's idea of the 'bloc', an integrated structure of discrete locality social groups with which other, similar, units have historically been aggregated to form larger units, even states.[72] Bailey's arguments on the character and functions of the 'clan' have been attacked on theoretical grounds.[73] On empirical grounds, it appears doubtful that such 'clan' units as he has found in highland Orissa, to which could be added such groups as the peasantry of Kongu or the Kallars of Madurai and Ramnad, ever constituted more than a minor variant of peasant organization within the Indian cultural sphere. The maintenance of such sequestered social units has been rare and probably restricted to relatively isolated territories, *cul-de-sacs*, or shatter-zones.[74] In perennial peasant territories, involving the greatest numbers of people, the problem for the peasantry was not the maintenance of some putative or real kinship organization, but the formation of viable coalitions based upon the mutual interests of various kinship and occupational groupings and their dependents. It would appear that the 'clan' model is appropriate for some cases, but by no means of most.

The complex agrarian operations of most *nadu* micro regions are most clearly illustrated with respect to the redistribution of locality income in the form of eleemosynary grants. Ironically, this is the same evidence upon which those who argue the primacy of the village depend. From Pallava times, changes in the status of villages and portions of villages, in which dominant cultivating

[72] *Political and Social Change in Orissa*. Also, 'Closed Stratification in India', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, v. 4, no. 1 (1963), pp. 107-24.

[73] *See*, Louis Dumont, 'A Note on Locality in Relation to Descent', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, v. 7 (March 1964), pp. 71-6.

[74] Bailey, 'Closed Stratification', seems quite aware of this and suggested in his postscript, pp. 122 and 124, that changes in scale of the territorial system would effect caste and caste systems.

groups relinquished a portion of the wealth they controlled to Brahman or Jaina *religieuse*, involved transfer arrangements executed through the dominant locality peasantry acting corporately as the *nadu* assembly. Formal actions solemnizing these changes involved a purported royal order (*tirumugam*) or communication (*kōṇōlai*) presented to the *nattar*. An example of this procedure is contained in one of the earliest Tamil inscriptions, of the middle sixth century, from Pallankoyil, Tirutturaipundi taluk, Tanjavur:

> Let the assembly of the *nāḍu* (i.e., the *nāṭṭār*) of the Perunagara-nādu, a sub-division of Venkunra-k-kōttam observe. We have granted the village of Amansērkkai in your *nāḍu* as *paḷḷichchandam* to the teacher (*kuṟavar*) Vajra-Nandi of Paruttikkunril. (Accordingly) you also walk (around) the hamlet [*paḍāgai*], plant [boundary] stones and milk-bush (*kaḷḷi*) and issue the order for proclamation to the assembly of the *nāḍu* (*nāṭṭār*). And the members of the assembly of the *nāḍu* (*nāṭṭār*) having seen the royal order, made obeisance and placed it on their heads, walked (around the boundaries of) the *paḍāgai*, planted stones and milk-bush and issued the order for proclamation (*araiyōlai*) according to which the boundaries are. . . .[75]

There are other instances of this in Pallava inscriptions.[76] Chola inscriptions carry out the same arrangements with some variations, perhaps reflecting the development, by that time, of various corporate entities who shared in the changes in distribution of locality resources. In the famous Larger Leiden Plates of Rajaraja I,[77] the village of Anaimangalam was granted to support the Buddhist shrine *(paḷḷi)* being built at Nagapattinam by the Malaysian ruler Chulamanivarman of Kadaram.[78] Those addressed in the Tamil portion of the plates included: the *nattar* of Pattana-kurram, the

[75] T.N. Subramaniam, 'Pallava Jain Copper-Plate', *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, p. 82, hereafter: *T.A.S.S.I., 1958-59*; reported in *A.R.E. 1958-59* as C.P. no. 10 and commented upon in the *Report*, p. 3; also *see*, Zvelebil, *Tamil in 550 A.D.*, pp. 13-14.

[76] For example, *see* 'Kasakkudi Plates of Nandivarman II', dated *c.* A.D. 753, *S.I.I.*, v. 2, no. 73, pp. 342-61.

[77] *E.I.* v. 22, no. 34, pp. 213-66, dated A.D. 1005 and edited by K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer.

[78] A recent record from Nagapattinam is of interest in this connection, *A.R.E. 1956-7*, no. 166, dated in the reign of Rajendra I, A.D. 1019, and refers to what appears to be a reciprocal gift by a Sri Vijaya ruler of Chinese Gold *(cīna kanagam)* to support a temple in Nagapattinam.

spokesmen (*kilavar*)[79] for *brahmadeya*s, those in charge of assemblies (*ūrgaḷilār*)[80] of Hindu temple villages (*devadāna*), Jaina or Buddhist shrine (*paḷḷichchanda*) villages, those settlements exempt from all dues (*kaṇimurrūṭṭu*),[81] villages whose income may have supported public works or vedic sacrifices,[82] and trade centres (*nagara*). The *nattar* appear, from this record, to have been the primary recipients of the order,[83] and they appear also to have been responsible for incising the record as suggested by the following lines:

> A royal order (*tirumugam*) embodying the above [specific income from Anaimaṅgalam which were henceforth to be paid to the shrine] and with the words, 'it behoves you [the *nattar*] to be with those persons [named as witnesses from many parts of the Coromandel plain] to point out the boundaries, to go around the hamlet accompanied by a female elephant, to set up [boundary] stones and milk-bush [markers], and to draw up and give the deed of the gift' . . . [This order] having been sent to us, the *nāṭṭōm*, . . . we the *nāṭṭōm* respectfully received and carried on our heads and accompanying the female elephant, walked round the hamlet, set up stones and milk-bush, drew up and gave the deed of gift.[84]

[79] The word *'kilavar'* is translated in slightly different ways by those who have commented on its usage. K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer in his edition of the record, *E.I.* v. 22, p. 258, renders it as 'headman'; T.N. Subramaniam (in the Pallankoyil epigraph, p. 88, discussed above) translates it as 'owner'; the *Tamil Lexicon* (p. 936) gives another meaning in addition, 'aged man', or elder, which, with 'spokesman', seems to come closer to the meaning in the context.

[80] Under *ūrgaḷilār*, the collectivity or 'body of the *ūr*', Subrahmanya Aiyer appears to put all village assemblies, including *nagara*s, except Brahman villages with *sabha*s, *E.I.* v. 22, p. 231.

[81] The epigraphist, K.G. Krishnan, in a personal communication, has suggested the *kaṇimurrūttu* grant was not for Brahmans, as usually understood, but for non-Brahman teachers.

[82] *Veṭṭapēru* is sometimes read as *veṭṭipēru* by Subrahmanya Aiyer (pp. 231 and 247, line 107) or by H. Krishnasastri, in his reading of the Tiruvalangadu Plates, where the meaning is as a service tenure of some sort, perhaps like that of sluice-keeper as is suggested by Subrahmanya Aiyer in his reading of the Larger Leiden Plates. However, T.N. Subramaniam reads the term as '*vēṭṭa*(1)*pēru*' signifying 'the performance of (Vēdic) sacrifices; Chola Jaina Copper Plate Grant', *T.A.S.S.I., 1958-9*, pp. 91-2.

[83] The Tamil portion of the Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rajendra I is addressed to the *nattar* and other locality groups in *mēlmalai palaiyanūr-nāḍu* and directs that the village of Palaiyanur, for which place the locality was named and which was a Brahman village (*brahmadeya*), was now to become a village subject to regular dues from cultivators (*veḷḷān-vagai*) and these were to be granted to the temple of Tiruvalangadu as *dēvadāna*. The opening Tamil portion follows the form cited in the 'Larger Leiden Plates' above, *S.I.I.*, v. 3, p. 427.

[84] *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 259, line 49ff.

After a detailed description of the lands, the income from which comprised the gift, the signatures of twenty-seven persons of the *nadu*, representing twenty-six major settlements of the locality, are appended.[85] Ten of the twenty-six people of the locality were members of Brahman village assemblies; the balance of the signatories represented mixed Brahman and non-Brahman assemblies *(ūrār)*.

An analysis of these *nadu* signatories is of some interest.[86] Lines 210 to 300 of the Larger Leiden Plates provide the names, titles, and villages of each. Of the twenty-seven signatories, the titles of six was *madhyastan* and ten were called *madhyastan-karaṇaṭṭāṉ*. The first term means, 'neutral person' and sometimes, 'headman'[87] while *karaṉaṭṭāṉ* means 'accountant'; the latter is given as the title of two of the *nadu* signatories. Five others were entitled, *karaṇaṭṭāṉ-vēṭkōvan*, the latter term meaning, 'potter'.[88] Of the balance, one of the signatories is identified as a *vaikhānasa* or Brahman who followed the ancient and exclusive *vaishnavāgama* of that name and, interestingly, represented not a brahman village assembly, *sabhā*, but an *ur;* as to the rest, the record provided no other information than the village which they represented. The titles, *madhyastan* and *karaṇaṭṭāṉ* suggest persons whose functions are *nadu*-wide, not simply powerful men of individual villages. *Karaṇaṭṭāṉ* especially, points to the fact that *nadu* management was in the hands of members of the locality population, and it anticipates the importance of the office of the 'karnam' in the eighteenth century when the British first encountered it.[89] Then, and earlier, the office of locality accountant was filled by important local people. 'Madhyastas', people of the middle, suggest the position of the dominant landed groups who sought to remain aloof from divisions within the locality. They were not impartial

[85] Ibid., List 'B', pp. 237-8.

[86] Ibid., plates 11-15, pp. 263-6.

[87] Under this term, Subramaniam, *S.I.T.I. Glossary,* xxxii, gives 'headman'; Subrahmanya Aiyer, throughout, uses the term 'arbitrator', cf. lines 210ff; for *karaṇāṭṭāṉ, see* Subramaniam, *S.I.T.I. Glossary*, p. xxv, 'accountant'.

[88] Subramaniam, *S.I.T.I. Glossary,* p. xci; *Tamil Lexicon,* p. 3821.

[89] For example, the Tanjavur *karṇam* continued to represent local interests long after the appointment of government accountants in 1807; the former were distinguished by the title *kudi karṇam* in contrast to the government, or *sarkār karṇam* according to F.R. Hemingway, *Tanjore (Madras District Gazetteers);* Government Press, Madras, 1915, p. 193.

mediators, but arbitrators whose decisions involving locality problems was based upon their powerful positions within local society. Again, one must look to the eighteenth century record for the right- and left-hand divisions and the position of the dominant peasantry which transcended both.[90]

This prominence given to the locally dominant peasantry is further supported by those parts of the Larger Leiden Plates which record signatures. The first signature on the list was a member of the dominant peasant group in the village of Anaimangalam:

> When the *nāṭṭār* were accompanying the [female] elephant and circumambulating the hamlet of Āṇaimaṅgalam, I Kōn Puttan, a Vellāla, residing at this Āṇaimaṅgalam, mounted the elephant, was present with them [the other witnesses in the procession], and showed the boundaries clearly, and this is my signature.[91]

Other inscriptions also refer to the circumambulation of a newly constituted settlement or portion of agricultural land granted to persons or to a temple, and in these cases too there are numerous local witnesses. In the Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rajendra Chola I, there is detailed reference to the circumambulation procedure and, again, a member of the dominant cultivating group of the locality, 'one born of the fourth caste (*chaturthānvaya*)', led the procession and concluded the other activities involved in demarcating the boundaries of the village.[92]

Dikshit has provided yet other examples of corporate *nadu* action primarily from southern Karnataka during the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. In Kadur district, a locality assembly (*nadu*) of the Devalige '70' territory, consisting of seventy *gāuṇḍa*s, met in A.D. 1074 to reward the public work of an individual; at Hemmanahalli, in Mysore district, an assembly formed of *gāuṇḍa*s or *prabhugāvuṇḍa*s of a number of villages met with a warrior chief (*daṇḍanāyaka*) in A.D. 1175; in another Mysore district village, Tondanur, in A.D. 1158, *prabhugāvuṇḍa*s and the representatives of major peasant households, *okkalu*, of thirty villages met to arrange support for the Vishnu deity of the place (*vittiruṇḍa perumāḷa*).[93]

[90] Cited in C.S. Srinivasachari, 'Origin of the Right and Left Hand Castes', p. 85.

[91] *E.I.*, v. 22, lines 207-10, p. 262.

[92] *S.I.I.*, v. 3, verse 132, p. 426. Also *see*, C.P. no. 10 and no. 14, 1958-9 and *A.R.E.*, 1958-9, pp. 4-5.

[93] Dikshit, op. cit., pp. 44-5.

It is necessary to underscore the central role taken by the dominant peasantry in reallocations of locality wealth with which records like the Leiden Plates of Rajaraja I deal. Scholars have long recognized the special functions of the *nattar*. We have K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer asserting that the prestigious representatives of *brahmadeya* villages, *dēvadāna* villages, trade centres (*nagara*) as well as other eleemosynary beneficiaries were under the administrative control of the *nattar*.[94] Additional new light has been provided in the recent, excellent work of Subbarayalu. He has clarified the connection between such well-recognized bodies as the *sabhas* of *brahmadeyas*, representatives of other religious institutions, the well-recognized mercantile interest of *nagarattar* of a locality and the very dimly perceived *veḷḷān-vagai* villagers.

Of 1,300 villages noted by Subbarayalu in Cholamandalam, about 250 were *brahmadeyas*, about 50 were *dēvadāna* villages, part of whose income was designated for particular temples and over which temple authorities had some administrative control, and 26 were *nagaras*, trade settlements and subject to the special influence of merchant assemblies. Villages identified as constituting *kaṇimurrūṭṭu*, *paḷḷichandan* (supporting Jaina savants or shrines), and *veṭṭapēru* grants are few. This leaves the vast number of villages in the residual category of *veḷḷān-vagai*, or peasant share villages, which most scholars recognize as the most numerous of all types of villages.[95]

Subbarayalu notes that among the various representative groups, one, the most numerous category, peasant villagers (*ūraā*), is missing. In a competent review of a series of inscriptions in which the *nattar* figure prominently, Subbarayalu concludes that the *nattar* can only be identified as the representatives of this largest category of village units of a locality—those called *veḷḷan-vagai* villages. He goes on to argue as follows:[96]

> If the *Nāḍu* were a *Veḷḷānvagai* group, the question may be raised why they are confined to only their respective Nāḍu units, when similar groups

[94] *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 231.

[95] A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (A.D. 1000-1500)*, University of Madras, Madras, 1936, v. 1, p. 152 and implied by Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, where he speaks of 'ryotwari' tenure (p. 531) and 'peasant proprietorship' (p. 570).

[96] Subbarayalu, op. cit., p. 36. His usage of 'nāḍu' and *'nāḍu'* is meant to distinguish between the territory and the assembly.

> existed in the neighbouring units. It is really a fact that the *Nāḍus* [i.e., *nāḍu* assemblies] functioned only within the limits of their Nadus [territories] at least till the end of the eleventh century A.D. The answer to the question is closely related to the basis of the Nāḍu region already considered. It was suggested that the Nāḍus were agricultural regions formed of groupings of agricultural settlements. Since the Nāḍus covered only small areas, it is possible that each group of agricultural settlements consisted mostly of kinsfolk. That is, each Nāḍu was basically a cohesive group of agricultural people tied together by marriage and blood relationships, the so-called chief villages forming the core of each group at the beginning. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that only on this hypothesis can a satisfactory explanation be given for the . . . many caste and communal sub-divisions of today which are mostly territorial in origin. Thus, then, because of the cohesive character of the segment of the society which each Nāḍu contained, the *Nāḍu* [assembly] functioned only within the limits of the respective territorial units [. . . . and] the *Nāṭṭār* were the *Veḷḷānvagai* group.

This view is very close to that of another who has demonstrated a mastery of Chola inscriptional evidence as well as a very acute historical sense, T.N. Subramaniam. He has emphasized the prominence of the *nattar* in Pallava as well as Chola times, noting that:

> . . . *dēvandāna*, *paḷḷichanda*, and *brahmadēya* villages were, at the time of their being granted . . . separated from the jurisdiction of . . . the *nāḍu* in which they were situated and constituted as autonomous villages.[97]

Peasant leadership in a locality, even if deeply rooted in networks of kinsmen and their dependents, could be threatened militarily. Successful *nattar* control demanded the capability of defence against both non-peasant marauders as well as other peasant folk. The exigencies of defence and the opportunities open to the more powerful for aggression against weaker neighbours provide one of the most important explanations of the *valangai veḷaikkāra*, soldiers of the right-hand division, who were the best-organized military organization of the Coromandel peasantry during the Chola period. The conception of the *vaḷaṅgai veḷaikkāra* as a standing, royal army is rejected here in favour of a conception of these essentially local armed units constituting a potential force which could be mobilized as required. Themselves the dominant peasantry in contiguous localities who periodically banded together

[97] *T.A.S.S.I.*, 1958-9, p. 88. He goes on to say that an analogous situation exists in modern Indian towns with panchayat unions within, but administratively separate from, the modern revenue district administration.

for purposes of mutual defence and occasional predatory raids under the leadership of an important overlord, the *valangai* leaders appear occasionally to have sought new agrarian territories. Tracts which were already under the plough but poorly defended, provided the most attractive targets.

The *nattar* of Tondaimandalam looked to the settled lands to the north-west for such expansion, and they were to remain the dominant peasantry there for centuries. The northern portion of the Tamil plain, or Tondaimandalam, was called Jayaṅgondachōḷa-maṇḍalam from the late tenth century to the twelfth. According to a Tamil inscription, found in Mulbagal taluk, Kolar district of modern Karnataka, the conquering peasantry of *Jayaṅgonda-chōḷamaṇḍalam*, 'a 48,000 country', recorded a revenue arrangement in A.D. 1072.[98] This arrangement apparently sought to maintain revenue practices extant in Tondaimandalam in this portion of Karnataka which had been conquered during the early years of Rajaraja I[99] and perhaps reconquered during the time of Rajendra Chola I. Following an introductory section referring to the conquest during Rajendra's time, the inscription reads:

> We of the assembly of the eighteen countries [or *nāḍus*]:[100] [*srī rājendra-chōḷa-padinen-pūmi-periya-vishaya*], the great army of the right-hand armed with great weapons [*perumbadi-valaṅgai-mahāsēnai*] . . . have caused an order [*śāsanam*] to be engraved on stone to the effect that there was no tax on cows and she-buffaloes since occupation of Nigarili-chōḷa-maṇḍalam seventy-eight nadus [Nulambapadi or central Karnataka] by the sacred family of the Chōḷas as well as in Jayangoṇḍachōḷa-mandalam 48,000 country, in both of which . . . the cultivators of the whole country came and settled. Therefore, the tax upon cows and she-buffaloes, ordered by [the officer] Adigārigal-Chōla Mūvēndavēlār should not be paid. For dry lands with dry crops, there should be paid a *melvāram* of one in five. For lands under tanks, there shall be paid a *melvāram* of one in three. For every 1500 *kuli* of land in which *kummari* [crop by shifting cultivation] is raised by the forest tribes [*vēḍar*], one cloth [*puḍavai*] shall be received. Additional dues such as *kummarakkachchāṇam* [temple dues], washermen's fees, dues on good buffaloes and good cows, and the like shall be two *kāsu* per head . . . [damaged portion], for petty dues, the *āśuvimak-kal* [Ajivakas] shall pay one *kāsu* per head, one-quarter

[98] The text and translation are published in *E.C.*, v. 10, no. 49a, pp. 86-7; other partial translations, Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, 538-9; K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical sketches . . .*, v. 1, pp. 351-2; Dikshit, op. cit., p. 49.

[99] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 174.

[100] Dikshit, op. cit., also notices this usage in Kannada inscriptions: *hadineṇṭu-vishaya* or *hadineṇṭu-nāḍu* (pp. 34 and 193).

> *kāsu* shall be received from each house of teachers [*uvatti*], of the men in charge of the temple and *talarar* [watchmen or temple (*taḷi*) committee]. The houses set apart for the minor tolls [*siṟu-śuṅgam*] are exempt. The lands shall be measured by rods 18 *sān* in length, a *sān* being equal to . . . [damaged]. Thus, [we of] the eighteen countries and the great army of the *valaṅgai* possessing large weapons had this document engraved on stone.

South-central and south-eastern Mysore, Gangavadi '96,000' during the twelfth century, included the territory between the Kolar and Hassan districts of modern Karnataka and the northern portion of modern Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu.[101] That this territory was under the domination of Tamils is clear from the large number of Tamil inscriptions there.[102] Reference to *nigarili-chōḷa-maṇḍalam* confirms the fact that this part of Karnataka was under the control of warriors associated with the Cholas; it was also called Nulambavadi and extended north beyond the Tungabhadra river in what is now Bellary and Anantapur districts of Andhra Pradesh and a portion of Chitaldrug district, Karnataka.[103]

The dominant peasants who referred to themselves as 'we of the *Srī-Rājēndrā-chōḷa-maṇḍalam-padinen-pūmi-vishaya*', or the assembly of the eighteen *nadu*s of *Srī-Rajēndrā-chōḷa-maṇḍalam*, were possibly a part of the army of Rajendra I which conquered the area in A.D. 1015, as stated in the introduction of the inscription, or were migrants from the Coromandel plain after that conquest. From inscriptions of the time of Kulottunga I, A.D. 1080, and Rajaraja II, A.D. 1160, which refer to *gaṅga-nāḍu* in *Nigarili-chōla-mandalam*, it appears that a deep thrust of the Chola overlordship into Karnataka had brought eastern parts of that country into a

[101] A detailed geographical description is contained in B.R. Gopal, 'The Later Western Chālukyas'. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Mysore, 1961, App. IV.

[102] See *Mysore Castes and Tribes*, v. 1, p. 114, fig. 8, for a map showing the distribution of Tamil inscriptions in the districts of Mysore, Bangalore, and Kolar with a scattering in Tumkur as well. Of such records in Mysore, there are over 100 along this northern part of the Kaveri, and those of Bangalore and Kolar cluster heavily in the fertile basins of the Ponnaiyar and Palar with a secondary distribution along the Penner.

[103] This is defined in Gopal, op. cit., with the designation, 'a 32,000 country'; an inscription of A.D. 1219 (303/1913) equates Nigarili-chōla-maṇḍalam with Nulumbapādi, *see* Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, pp. 344 and 723-4.

state of prospective settlement by Coromandel peasant settlers.[104] The nucleus of that settlement may have been military colonists similar to those which, during the reign of Kulottunga I, were established in other outlying areas of the Chola overlordship. Colonies called *nilaippaḍai* were found on the principal lines of communication in Pandya country and in Travancore;[105] these colonies of warrior-peasants were reported to have been established in the northern hill tracts around Kalahasti (modern Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh) and may have existed in still other parts of the macro region where Chola conquests occurred.[106] The references to Nulambavadi and its association with peasant settlers from Tondaimandalam also points to the vast territory which had come to be included under the influence of cultivating groups from the Coromandel plain by the eleventh century. Though this great territory was not continuous, but broken by ranges of hills and, at that time, dense forests, those tracts capable of settled peasant agriculture based upon tank and riverine irrigation appeared to be in close contact with each other.

Another interesting aspect of the inscription discussed above, in addition to the references to the *valangai* which is commented upon further below (ch. V), is the designation of Tondaimandalam as a '48,000 country'. This occurs in other inscriptions of the period, and it is among the few instances in which a territory is given a numerical designation in Tamil inscriptions.[107] As noted above, such designations are common in Kannada inscriptions or Sanskrit inscriptions from medieval Karnataka; they also occur in inscriptions from Andhra.[108] This Mulbagal record of the time

[104] 676/1905 and 18/1900; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, pp. 564 and 653.

[105] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 313; *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 2281, glosses the word as 'standing army stationed in the capital of a country'.

[106] V. Venkatasubba Ayyer, 'Kalahasti and its Inscriptions', *QJMS*, v. 16 (1925-6), p. 22.

[107] Other records of the 48,000 *(nārpatteṇ-nāyiravar)* are: 238/1959-60, at Palghat, 10th C., 273/1950-51 and *A.R.E., 1950-1*, p. 3 at Tanjavur and *E.I.*, v. 27, no. 18, p. 106, 12th Century, South Arcot. Other numbered units include Miladu 2000 in Tirukkoyilur Taluk, South Arcot, *A.R.E., 1921-22*, p. 8.

[108] For Karnataka: Gopal, op. cit., and A.P. Karmarkar, *Cultural History of Karnataka (Ancient & Medieval)*, Karnataka Vidyavaidaka Sangha, Dharwar 1947, pp. 64-5. For Andhra Pradesh: Pala-Nadu in Nellore is called a '21,000 country' in 22/1956-57; the text of this inscription was earlier published *in* A. Butterworth and V. Venugopaul Chetty, *A Collection of the Inscriptions on Copper Plates and Stones in the Nellore District* (3 Vols.), Government Press, Madras, 1905, Ongole

of Kulottunga I being found in what is now Karnataka, but which then contained a basic population of Telugu speakers over whom Tamil peasant-warriors had extended their control,[109] may account for the rare usage in a Tamil inscription. Further, this usage as encountered in a Tamil inscription, apart from what it reveals about *nadu*s, may offer a clue to the still vexing problem of the numerical designations in other parts of medieval Karnataka as well as Andhra.

Numerical designations for territories in Karnataka appear to date from the seventh century and continue to be used until the early Vijayanagara period. The epigraphist, J.F. Fleet, was among the first to speculate about the meaning of numerical suffixes for territorial units, numbers ranging from 750,000 (seven and one half lakhs) for Rattavadi, comprising most of northern Karnataka, to a locality as small as Vavulatalla 'twelve'.[110] He argued that smaller numbers — tens and hundreds — may have referred to actual settlements within a particular territory whereas larger numbers were conventional or 'traditional'. Lewis Rice, the early Karnataka epigraphist, drew Fleet's criticism for his quite realistic disbelief about such very large numbers of villages assumed in even some of the smaller numerical suffixes. As to the larger numbers, Rice suggested that 'thousands' referred to *nāḍ*s; thus, Gangavadi '96,000' would refer to a large tract comprised of 96 *nadu*s or localities and Banavasi '12,000' to a territory of twelve divisions.[111] More recent students of medieval Karnataka have striven to show that the smaller numerical designations refer to villages and have adduced some supporting evidence. However,

Taluk, no. 139, dated A.D. 1218, III, pp. 1129-30 showing that the segment referring to the numbers for the territory were not clear. However, there is no ambiguity in the recent epigraphical report; a Kannada inscription at Warangal of the Chalukyas of Kalyana, dated A.D. 1118 refers to the place as Anmakonda-7,000. Other references to numbered territories in medieval Andhra may be found in: Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series, *Kannada Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh,* eds. P. Sreenivasachar and P.B. Desai, no. 3, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1961, no. 73, p. 29; no. 88, p. 34; no. 94, p. 35.

[109] Avani, where this Kulōttuṅga inscription was found, is said to be in *Āndhra-maṇḍala* in an inscription of the 4th C. A.D.: B. Lewis Rice, 'Mudyanur Plates of Saka 261 of the Bana King Malladeva-Nandivarman', *I.A.*, v. 15 (June, 1886), p. 172. It was then and later a well-known sacred site associated with Rama.

[110] 'Ancient Territorial Divisions of India', *JRAS* (1912), pp. 707-10.

[111] Discussed in Dikshit, op. cit., pp. 26-7. In his opinion, this explanation was plausible.

they also propose that the idea of 'village' may have been different from the modern one, though different in what respects is unclear.[112]

Another possible explanation of the smaller numerical suffixes attached to place-names in medieval Karnataka and Andhra is that they refer to the peasant household units, *okkalu*, of those who originally conquered or colonized a locality. These conquerors or colonizers might then have continued to refer to themselves, as a corporate unit, by some conventional number based upon the historical colonization event. This suggestion would accord with a parenthetical statement of Dikshit who sought to explain village assemblies (e.g., 'Seventy of Kāginele') as the number of families which originally established the village and corporately preserved their ascendant rights by the use of a numerical title even after many more households had come into existence.[113] Here, groups of peasant households, *okkalu*, are given a primacy which conforms with the importance of the *nadu* to which Dikshit gives full recognition. Numerical designations in their lower ranges would thus be understood as referring to corporate groups of peasant households within localities, or *nadu*s. The larger numbers, like Gangavadi '96,000' would refer, as Rice long ago suggested, to conventional ways of expressing the clustering of such localities.

The term '48,000' is important in the legends of Tondaimandalam. Numerous local traditions refer to the warrior Adonai (or Ananda) Cakravartin who conquered Tondaimandalam from its pastoral occupants, the Kurumbars, and brought 48,000 'selected and good' families of Vellalas to settle the central and northern portions of the Tamil plain.[114] The inscriptional reference

[112] Dikshit, op. cit., p. 28; S. Ritti, 'The Belavola Desa', *Jagadguru Tontadarya College Miscellany*, v. 4, pp. 2-3; B.R. Gopal, 'The Later Western Chalukyas (From the Earliest Times to 1076 A.D.', unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Mysore University, 1961, especially App. IV, pp. 431-40 and a personal communication from Gopal, 19 Feb. 1968.

[113] Dikshit, op. cit., p. 75.

[114] *See* B. Ramaswami Naidu, 'Remarks on the Revenue System and Landed Tenures of the Provinces under the Presidency of Fort St. George', *JRAS* [Communicated by John Hodgson] (1834), pp. 295ff; a similar version from the Mackenzie Collection of the late eighteenth century is found in *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, v. 7, pp. 382-5. Variants of this legend, involving the migration of Vellalas from Tondaimandalam to Pandya country may be found in M. Arokiaswami,

to *jayaṅgoṇḍa-chōḷa-maṇḍalam* 48,000 *bhūmi* (Tamil: *pūmi*) is thus significant in relationship to the legendary migration of Vellala families who divided the Tondaimandalam territory (called *jayaṅgoṇḍa-chōlamaṇḍalam* during the Chola period) into 48,000 sections.[115] Though details of this Tondaimandalam legend may be a late invention to justify Vellala local authority as the *nattar*, or leading people, of Tondaimandalam, it is obviously based upon earlier usage. It was almost certainly Vellalas, *nattar* of Tondaimandalam, who controlled the area called Rajendra-chola 'eighteen countries' and who comprised the *valangai* army to which the A.D. 1072 inscription makes reference. This assertion is further supported by evidence from the *Kārmaṇḍala-Śatakam*.[116] From several verses of the *Śatakam*, we learn that the Karalar people were related to the 'Ganga people.[117] Thus, Gangavadi '96,000', as the tract including *rājēndra-chōḷa-padiṇen-vishaya* was usually called during the medieval period, appears to be the same as *karmaṇḍala*, '96 nadus' of the *Śatakam*. The commentator on the *Karmaṇḍala-Śatakam* explained that the references in verse seven to thirty-two *nadu*s and sixty-four *nadus* meant that there were 32,000 and 64,000 Karalar families in these places, or 96,000 for the entire territory.

From extant inscriptions of Tamil country and Karnataka, the evidence is clear that the *nattar* represented the dominant peasant group or groups of the locality. In numerous records, the *nattar* are differentiated from other important local groups having interests in the land and in all cases the *nattar* have a primacy over these other groups as the recipients of the purportedly royal order and

The Early History of the Vellar Basin, Amudha Nilayan Press, Madras, 1954, p. 36, and involving the migration of Vellalas from Tulu country (North Kanara) to Tondaimandalam in D.B. Ramachandra Mudaliar, 'Mudaliar', *QJMS*, v. 10 (1919-20), pp. 289ff. Suresh, *H.C.G.E.S.*, p. 236, notes that persons, including three Brahmans use this numerical designation *(nāṛpatteṇṇāyira)* in their names but fails to recognize this as a reference to their origin, i.e. Tondaimandalam.

115 Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 'bhūmi'*, p. 763. The division of Tondaimandalam into *kōṭṭam* and *nāḍu* is attributed to Adonai Cakravartin; *see* Ramaswami Naidu, op. cit., pp. 295-6.

116 The *Śatakam* was written by one Araikilar of Avinasi and the commentary was prepared by P.A. Muthuthandavaroya Pillay, Madras, 1930, verses 1-7.

117 Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 507, where he cites in evidence: the Tiruvalangadu Plates, *S.I.I.*, v. 3, the Anbil Plates in *E.I.*, v. 15, *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no. 142, and the 'Larger Leiden Plates' of *E.I.*, v. 22.

were it executors. In what appears to have been a well-established procedure, the *nattar* classified and registered lands within the locality and took prime responsibility for effecting changes in the distribution of income from cultivated land.[118] Only peasant groups of a locality who actually controlled the cultivable land could have carried out the functions described in these numerous records. They alone possessed the valuable land whose income could constitute a gift to the pious and the learned; they alone possessed the means for maintaining the full productivity of these lands dependent as most were upon irrigation works which served the entire locality; and they alone through their control over dependent labourers — both skilled artisans and unskilled field hands who actually carried out field operations — could have assured that once granted, the specified income from villages and lands granted would sustain a flow of income 'in perpetuity'.

Through these references to the *nattar*, we perceive a corporate entity consisting of those prestigious, *sātvik* peasant families linked together by their common dominion over the land and reinforced by marriage alliances, close social relations, shared religious and ritual affiliations, and common allegiance to locality chiefs who, in this period, were of the *nattar*. These locality social systems of peasant folk were maintained by Vellalas throughout the Tamil region and by the Vokkaligas and Kapus in Karnataka and Andhra at this time. Locality interests and dominance would invariably, in the South Indian context, come to reflect themselves as a multiplicity of territorially specific subdivisions among the *nattar* and would be imitated by those lower status groups linked to those enjoying locality dominance.

In the light of the obvious importance of the *nattar*, it is interesting to speculate about the elaborate solemnizing processes described in many of the copperplate inscriptions. Ostensibly these documents recorded a gift and sought to assure its longevity just as inscribing its provisions upon a temple wall did. The copperplate inscriptions record gifts to individual priests or teachers — Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina — or to groups of such persons as recipients; attention is focused upon the receiver or receivers and that which is received, and both are very elaborately described. The copperplates, thus, become instruments of new rights created in land or some other value. Most stone inscriptions differ in that they

118 Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 467 and 504-5.

record the beneficence of a donor or donors to the god or priests of the temple, and the major focus is upon the giver.

The lengthy Sanskrit *praśastis* of copperplate inscriptions would seem to belie this distinction between copper and stone epigraphs. In most of the bilingual — Sanskrit and Tamil — copperplates, as in most stone inscriptions of the Chola period, the reigning overlord and, often, subordinate chiefs of the neighbourhood are praised. Special praise is lavished upon the petitioner (*vijñāpti*) for the grant.[119]

The two languages employed in the Chola copperplate inscriptions emphasize two purposes served by these records. The operative portions of these inscriptions and others are in Tamil; they are exact and detailed in describing the lands from which a portion of income is being transferred and in identifying the recipients of these grants. Sanskrit portions name the Chola overlord and provide his genealogical and warrior bona fides. The Tamil portions describe in detail the grant and the grantee, naming the most important social groups in the locality where the grant is made and providing for their solemn association with and assent in the grant. While the Sanskrit portions of the plates constitute the most important and comprehensive public records of the day, the Tamil portions provide a view of the key groups of the locality in action, and this, plus the solemn procession, suggest that the grant was a way of conferring honour upon such groups.

There is some evidence to suggest that the Sanskrit plates were executed separately from the Tamil plates and at different times. Rajaraja I introduced the technique of a standard *praśasti* which was affixed to many of the inscriptions of his time, a practice followed by his descendents.[120] The Sanskrit plates of the Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rajendra I were clearly added a decade after

[119] See the 'Larger Leiden' Plates, Sanskrit and Tamil, 21 plates, 443 lines of writing, *E.I.*, v. 22, no. 34; the Tiruvalangadu Plates, both languages, 31 plates, 816 lines, *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no. 205; the Karandai Plates, both languages, 55 plates, 2,500 lines of writing but, as yet, not properly edited, *see* N. Lakshminarayan Rao, 'Some New Facts About Chōla History', *Journal of Oriental Research*, v. 19 (1950), pp. 209ff.

[120] Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of Indian History*, p. 69. He discusses some of the differences between copperplate and stone inscriptions, noting that the latter began to increase after the sixth century, 'but copper plate records continue to be the mainstay of the historian for some centuries more, and at no time can they be left out of the reckoning (ibid., p. 61).

the donative Tamil plates,[121] and, in one recently discovered set of plates of the tenth century, only the Tamil language portion, consisting of six plates, inscribed on both sides, remains. In this latter case, the Sanskrit plates were never added to the Tamil ones which number from '13', indicating that this addition was intended.[122] This is perhaps the clearest evidence yet discovered relating to the differences between the two sections of copperplate inscriptions.

When, during later times, temples became the principal repositories of public records, the relatively balanced and realistic association of peasant groups with the operation of locality life reflected in the Chola period became obscure. The prominence of stone inscriptions from temples accurately reflect an important shift in institutional power, but, owing to their almost exclusive concern with the affairs of the brahmanical temple, they inaccurately reflect other aspects of social and economic life at a later time.

More than 550 *nadu*s are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Chola period until about A.D. 1300. These cannot of course be considered as equivalent units, or segments, anymore than the 333 taluks of the macro region during the twentieth century can be so regarded.[123] There were obvious and great variations among these basic units of agrarian organization: in size, population, quality of their resource base, isolation, and antiquity. To say a great deal more about these hundreds of *nadu*s, or as they might otherwise be called 'nuclear localities' or 'segments' is to venture well beyond the evidence of the Chola period, but such an excursion, so long as it is understood as tentative, may be useful.

During almost the entire time of the great Cholas — from around A.D. 1000 to 1200 — the 550 *nadu*s of the macro region were primary *loci* of agrarian society. While each of these constituted an almost self-sufficient ethno-agrarian micro region and while

[121] *S.I.I.*, v. 3, p. 384.

[122] *A.R.E.*, 1961-2, C.P. no. 29, pp. 4-5; also published by T.N. Subramaniam, *T.A.S.S.I.*, 1958-9, pp. 84-110.

[123] Based on Subbarayalu, op. cit., App., pp. 98-109. Taluk data for the twentieth century is as follows: Mysore districts in the divisions of Bangalore (48) and Mysore (51) are 99 and Madras territory within the macro region (excluding Malabar and a few other places) had 234 taluks according to Government of Mysore, Department of Statistics, *Mysore State in Maps* (1958), p. 3 and Government of Madras, *Alphabetical List of Villages in the Taluks and Districts of the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1933, pp. iii-v.

most pre-dated the establishment of the imperial Chola state, all were linked together as parts of a great kingdom. What linked them were their common recognition of the Chola kings; the imitation by local chiefs of some of the royal styles of these kings, especially their support of brahmanical institutions — *brahmadeyas* and temples devoted to the worship of Vedic gods; and by the occasional massing of military resources of a number of *nadus* for predatory or defensive warfare. Each *nadu* was a segmental part of a single, unified conception of Hindu kingship; each constituted a basic bloc of which the edifice of the realm was composed.

But, there were significant differences among these hundreds of localities with respect to their internal organization and with respect to their connections with other localities.

Some *nadu* localities were elaborately hierarchical. Here there were ancient ruling lineages, some were vestiges of an ancient tradition of kingship; here there were great establishments of Brahmans where the highest forms of brahmanical learning was cultivated and transmitted and where the highest forms of ritual of this *bhakti* age were practised; here too were large and wealthy agricultural and mercantile settlements. Political, religious, and economic links among such *nadus* were strong; in the Kaveri, these linkages among its populous localities were strengthened by the proximity of the royal power and authority of the Cholas. As a condition of existence of such wealthy and populous *nadus* was the reliability of water for irrigated agriculture. Protection and regulation of water courses was a major political concern for such localities, and the certainty and relative abundance of water meant that they represented the greatest concentrations of agricultural labourers, then as now stigmatized as impure and sequestered in a *paṟaiyār-cēri*, separated from the main settlements of any locality. *Nadus* of such strong vertical segmentation, or hierarchy, may be designated 'central *nadus*'.

There were central *nadus* in almost every part of the macro region, even in some of the more remote peripheral areas. In form, these resembled the central localities of the Kaveri core of the Chola segmentary state. Here, local society was most hierarchical in its organization, Chola influences and political authority were most evident, Brahmans were most numerous and accorded high status and the settlements controlled by their *mahasabhas* were often linked together as satellites of a central *brahmadeya*, chieftainships

were ritually assimilated to the Chola kingship (e.g. *muvendavelar*), and *nadu*s were smaller in size and larger in population as well as more closely linked together as in the case of the *niyāyam*s of Chola country or *periyanadu*s elsewhere. Paradigmatically, the central *nadu* consisted of the following ranked elements:

Central Nadu

Cholas

Muvendavelar chiefs

Brahmadeyas ← Brahmans → Central place *Brahmadeyas*

Niyayam or *Periyanadu* ← Dominant Peasantry (*Nattar*) → *Niyayam* or *Periyanadu*

Lower Peasantry and Dependents

Artisan-Traders

Landless Labourers

Yet another type of *nadu* was to be found in those tracts of the lowlands or in the large interior upland above the plain which lacked reliable sources of moisture for regular or extensive irrigated agriculture. These may be designated as 'intermediate *nadu*s'.

In these tracts, agriculture was a matter of considerable risk and uncertainty, requiring the utmost skill and effort by agriculturists. Successful occupation of the land here was more a matter of such skill and effort than military prowess; and here wealth for the support of elaborate royal or religious institutions was seldom available, resulting in fewer of the hierarchical elements found in central *nadu*s. Instead, various agricultural groups, usually mobile, often migrants from elsewhere, joined older, established peasant groups in localities which offered the prospect of simple livelihood as a return on their cultivating skills and their modest and mobile agricultural capital of animals, tools, and seeds. Dif-

ferences among such groups would not take the form of rank or status distinctions, but of subcaste and clan affiliation among all of whom a rough equality was maintained under the rule of a chieftain (or occasionally, a minor king) of those belonging to the oldest, established peasant groups of the locality. This horizontal segmentation among subcastes and clans along with the relatively sparse populations supportable by mixed agricultural and pastoral utilization of these dry lands made for fewer durable linkages among neighbouring *nadu*s as compared with central ones. Intermediate *nadu*s, with their more diverse peasant groupings, tended to be somewhat more independent, more isolated from the others; often however, their constituent peasant and pastoral peoples maintained cult and marriage contacts with their subcaste and clan brethren in neighbouring *nadu*s.

*Nadu*s or segments of an intermediate character differed from the hierarchically organized, central *nadu*s in several crucial respects. Each of the central *nadu*s was closely linked to a ruling dynasty; for most of the Chola period, this was the Chola dynasty in the Kaveri core region. But, in the intermediate *nadu*s the sovereignty of other dynasties was recognized. In the Pandya country, a part of the Chola segmentary state, the Pandyan dynasty was barely suppressed by Chola power. It reasserted itself vigorously in the thirteenth century. The Pallavas of Tondaimandalam were remembered long after the demise of the dynasty by the widely used chief's title, 'Pallavarayan'. Intermediate *nadu*s on the edges of the Kaveri — the centre of Chola power — were capable of being detached from allegiance to the Kaveri overlord by other dynastic powers such as the Hoysalas and Pandyas.

Another feature of the intermediate *nadu* segments was that chieftains were less fully incorporated by the Chola kingship. Here, the basis of authority of chiefs resided in their leadership over the segmentarily organized, dominant peasant folk of their localities. In contrast to central *nadu*s, where political management involved the exalted and separated, dharmic, king-like control over numerous groupings in complex interaction under powerful village representatives of the *nattar*, in intermediate *nadu*s more direct political control appeared to vest in local chiefs. These hereditary chieftains of dominant, local agricultural groups exercised not lofty *dharmic* rule, but the direct, proprietory rule

of *kṣatra*.[124] It was from among such chiefs that the Pandya dynasty, 'the Five Pandyas' maintained a hovering presence through much of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and re-emerged in the thirteenth century; it was similar chiefs, called *paṭṭakkārar*, who controlled much of Kongu at the same time.

The number of Brahmans in intermediate *nadu*s was possibly not insignificant, but the institutions with which Brahmans were associated in the central ones were far fewer. Evidence of the Chola period suggests that not all Brahmans, nor even most, were members of villages controlled by *Mahasabha*s, nor were they members of Vedic temple establishments protected and patronized by the mighty. The territorialization of Brahman sub-castes reported during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the status differences between the major divisions of *sastr*ic Brahman castes and the *vaidika* or temple Brahmans may be taken as evidence that most of them lived among peasant villagers. Here they enjoyed special privileges deriving from their priestly functions, but they lacked the visible institutional and sacral prestige of *sastr*ic Brahmans in the central *nadu* segments. Brahmans in the intermediate segments would thus have been closely linked to ranked chiefs who, with their peasant clientele, they served ritually.

Still another feature of the intermediate *nadu* segment was the shallow hierarchy of relationships as compared to that of the central *nadu*; characteristically, horizontal rather than vertical segmentation was characteristic of the former. Within each intermediate *nadu* segment, villages might be dominated by one or another of the several blocs of peasant peoples of the macro region (e.g., *chōliyār, koṅgu*); each *nadu* segment would be dominated by one of these blocs. Within Pandimandalam and Tondaimandalam, there appear to have been several blocs of castes whose sub-units were dominant in some of the localities of the zone while in other localities they might be subordinate to another zonal bloc sub-unit. Those dominant in a *nadu* segment consisted of that peasant group with numerical strength, with possession of share (*paṅgu*) rights over numerous parcels of land in the locality,

[124] See the discussion of Robert Lingat on the concepts of *dharma* and *kṣatra* in his *The Classical Law of India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973, pp. 211-13.

and with close status and social relationships with basic service groups, including artisans and merchants involved in the agricultural economy. The '*pañja jāti*' (five castes) of Kongu in present day Kongu exhibits the characteristics of caste dominance referred to here.[125]

The tendency for the intermediate *nadu* segments to be dominated by peasants and service groups sharing a nearly common status, identity, and a common zonal caste name produced two apparent structural features which further distinguished the intermediate from the central *nadu*. While the evidence on this is sketchy, mobile artisan-traders — kammalars or *panchayattar*s — appear usually to have been separated from this core population of the locality and enjoying higher status than the same groups in the central *nadu* segments. In the twelfth century, artisan-traders in Kongu and elsewhere appeared to have striven for and attained status parity with the local peasant folk among whom they lived. Prior to that time, and later, mobile artisan-traders maintained linkages with others like themselves in other places and constituted zonal alliances of the *iḍaṅgai*. Notwithstanding the greater difficulty of intermediate *nadu*s achieving the massing capability of central ones as a consequence of their greater horizontal segmentation and the absense of the proximate mobilizing activities of kings, some of this did occur as we have seen. It was precisely such a massing of dominant peasant groups which took the epithet of 'right-hand castes' as well as designations like the '48,000' of *jayankoṇḍachōḷamaṇḍalam* (Tondaimandalam) in the Mulbagal epigraphy of A.D. 1072.

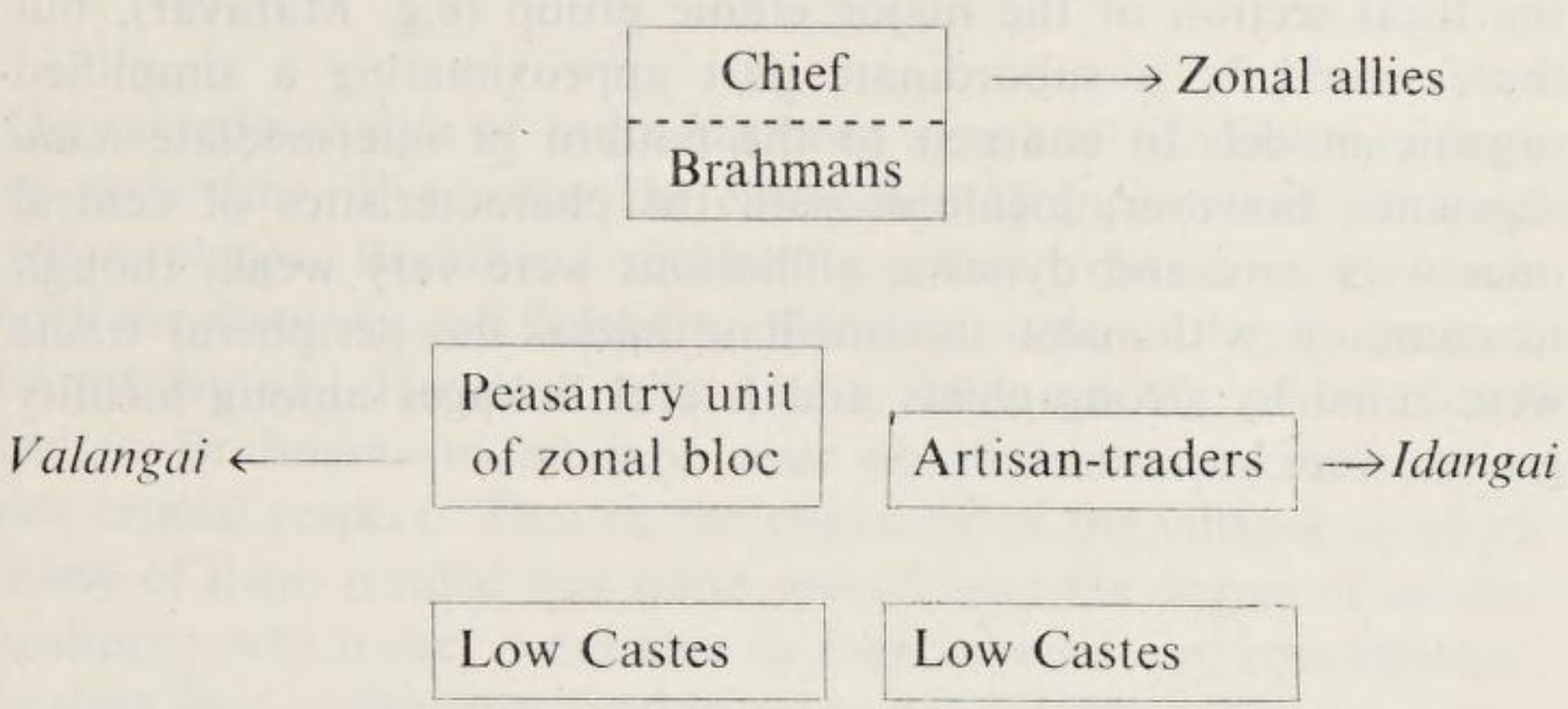
Diagramatically, the intermediate *nadu* segment may be represented as on the next page.

A third type of *nadu* may be distinguished. In those parts of the macro region least hospitable to sedentary agriculature or even to mixed agricultural and pastoral activities were scattered *nadu* localities in which neither vertical segmentation, or hierarchy, nor elaborate horizontal segmentation prevailed. These may be designated as peripheral *nadu*s.

*Nadu*s of the peripheral type in the Chola kingdom displayed the strongest 'tribal' characteristics. That is, most of the people

[125] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 267 and Thurston, op. cit., v. 3, p. 419. The five castes comprise Vellalas, Chettis, barbers, washermen, and Paraiyar.

Intermediate Nadu



of these localities shared a single common ethnic identity, usually a section of some larger regional group such as Maravar or Reddi. Isolation and the hazardous basis of livelihood in the peripheral tracts were the major reasons for this tribal feature. It is doubtful that the peoples of the peripheral tracts were racially distinctive in any sense whatever during the medieval period, if they had ever been. In any case, they were not on this or any other account excluded from contemporary *dharm*ic society. In fact, as already pointed out, Maravars and Kallars of the southern peninsula appear to have been acceptable sections of the Tamil-speaking peoples in the early centuries of the Christian era as this society is revealed in Classical poetry. Only in British times did the pejorative designation 'criminal tribes' come into existence.

While evidence of peripheral *nadu*s is for the most part inferential for the medieval period, it would appear that there was regular contact between those of the peripheral *nadu*s and more prosperous peasant peoples contiguous to them. Relations with itinerant merchants and with colonies of plains migrants were important forms of contact; participation in military expeditions with plains

people may have been another important form of contact. Such interactions, however intermittent, secured a place for the isolated folk of the peripheral areas within the larger society of the macro region; contact also provided a model of a way of life followed by the peasant folk in neighbouring areas for at least the more prosperous of the peripheral people to adopt. The latter, along with genuine colonists from the intermediate *nadu*s, created a two-part society in the peripheral areas. Domination was that of the local section of the major ethnic group (e.g. Maravar), but there would be a subordinate part approximating a simplified organic model. In contrast to the pattern of intermediate *nadu* segments, however, localities with the characteristics of central ones were rare and dynastic affiliations were very weak, though in common with most intermediate *nadu*s the peripheral tracts were ruled by strong chiefs and lateral linkages among locality groups were important.

CHAPTER IV

The Coromandel *Brahmadeya* Village

The sacerdotal élite of India has been a part of rural society from an early time. Even after the emergence of ancient and medieval urban places, Brahmans retained a 'rustic' character to which both the diversity and flexibility of Indian civilization may, in part, be attributed.[1] However, the quality of rural life which South Indian Brahmans maintained over centuries was exceptional in one crucial respect. That is, the character of the villages in which many of them resided was quite special, and the degree of secular authority which they were able to exercise was very considerable, in their own settlements, and in many other settlements dependent upon Brahman villages through their powerful spokesmen, the 'great men' of the *sabha*. In no other part of the sub-continent was such a measure of influence achieved and maintained by Brahmans as in the villages and the localities of the Coromandel plain.[2] The Coromandel *brahmadeya* villages were unique centres of civilization whose culture moulded that of the peasantry around them; they were also thriving centres of agrarian activity.

There can be little doubt that the kinds of Brahman villages

[1] More than any other historian of India, D.D. Kosambi stressed this fact in his various works: see especially, 'The Basis of Ancient Indian History', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, pt 2, v. 75, no.4 (1955), pp. 235-6; *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Perspective*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, pp. 175-6. In general, however, the nature of urban places in early India is poorly understood and deserves more serious attention than is provided in works such as: B.N. Puri, *Cities of Ancient India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1966.

[2] *See* A.S. Altekar, *A History of Village Communities in Western India*, O.U.P., Madras, 1927, pp. 26, 123-4. Altekar not only explicitly compared the village types of western and southern India but also criticizes some of the scholarship on this issue which combines evidence from widely different times and places, especially that of R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1922 and R.K. Mukerji, *Local Government in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1958.

which dotted the Coromandel plain during the Chola period were relatively scarce elsewhere in the macro region. From extant evidence, there were few Brahman villages, governed by a *sabha* of the learned and capable of the full management of their own affairs, beyond the fertile, well-watered plain. Wanting in most parts of the macro region beyond the plain were requisite peace and security, and ecotypic conditions for agriculture prosperous enough to support large populations of Brahmans. Without such conditions the Coromandel type of Brahman village could not exist. Even where such conditions could and did exist in the interior uplands of the macro region, there was not a dominant peasantry which regarded this institution as desirable or necessary as did the peasantry of the plain. However, if the Brahman villages themselves could not be established and maintained in the macro region beyond the plain, the culture of these centres of civilization certainly did reach these more remote areas. The *mathas* and other centres of learning in the Coromandel *brahmadeyas* served as disseminating points of a high and distinctive culture not only to young Brahmans of various parts of the plain, but to those who came, often from great distances, to study and to carry back to their home territories ritual and theological elements which shaped the high culture in the temples and *mathas* of the interior cultural hinterland. It must be supposed that other ideas were also carried in the same way. Hence, while the great *brahmadeya* villages, the subject of this section, are appropriately identified with the plain, they must be treated as distinctive institutions of the macro region as a whole.

How Brahmans were able to establish and maintain these unique rural centres of civilization has been suggested above in the discussion of Brahmans and peasants during and after the Pallava period. The complementarity of social, political, and ideological objectives of the Coromandel Brahmans and the dominant peasantry of that region was responsible for this accomplishment; the persistence of reciprocal advantages in the relationship between Brahmans and peasants assured the durability of these settlements. Basic changes, when they did occur after the twelfth century, were only partly a consequence of the development of divergent aims between peasants and Brahmans and from pressures in society beyond this relationship. Forces were actually generated within the Brahman villages and the Brahman world which contributed significantly to the decline of these villages.

However unique and important Brahman villages as centres of civilization and agriculture may be shown to be, their place and functions can be, and have been, exaggerated, and the role of the village as a unit of society, politics, and economy correspondingly distorted. Many of the inscriptions which we possess deal with *brahmadeya* villages; a few refer to the locality with its numerous settlements of non-Brahman cultivators. From the point of view of agrarian relations, the latter were obviously more important. Because Brahman villages were well-defined, well-organized, and highly visible in the historical record of the time, the assumption has been that peasant villages were but slightly different versions of the *brahmadeya* villages. This view has been strengthened by the manner in which the British dealt with the village unit for revenue purposes on the assumption, or with the justification, that they were adapting to the usage of 'time immemorial', when actually it suited British political requirements and their agrarian preconceptions.[3] Historians have not adequately recognized that the atomic village of recent times reflected important agrarian changes after the Chola period; too much emphasis has been placed upon village units in a period when this was not a primary unit of social and agrarian organization, which it was to some extent later to become.

Seen in the context of the *nadu*, or the peasant micro region, Brahmans were one of several kinds of social groups distinguishable by the fact of their significantly higher status than even the most powerful peasant people and their ritual and learned functions which set them apart from others. As noted in the Chola copper-plate inscriptions, particularly, Brahmans in *brahmadeya* villages shared a common position in relation to the *nattar* along with others engaged in sacral functions such as certain Vedic, Jaina, and even Buddhist functionaries and teachers. Merchants and artisans involved in commodity production and exchange outside of the immediate local peasant economy were also accorded a special, autonomous position with respect to the dominant peasant people of a locality with whom substantial political authority and economic power vested. However, Brahmans were distinctive in

[3] Walter C. Neale, 'Land Is To Rule', *in* Robert E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, pp. 3-17; Louis Dumont, 'The Village Community from Munro to Maine', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, v. 9 (December 1966), pp. 67 ff.

that they alone maintained village establishments governed by assemblies of their most learned members, and these settlements were further distinctive in being the most important religious and educational centres of the time. Though it is not to be presumed that all — or indeed most — Brahmans lived in these *sabha*-governed villages but, rather, that many Brahmans lived in villages attached to temples (*dēvadāna*) or in ordinary peasant villages, and though it is also clear that there were many non-Brahmans who lived within the large *brahmadeya* villages, still the latter were among the most important cultural institutions of the time.

In the Coromandel lowland by the ninth century, and in other parts of the macro region later, control over cultivable land and its wealth was held either by peasants comprising the *nattar* or by Brahmans. Distinctions between the two were carefully maintained as suggested by the terms *ūrar* and *veḷḷan-vagai*, for the former, and *sabha* and *brahmadeya*, for the latter. *Urars* and *sabhas* were assemblies composed of representatives of the two basic types of agrarian settlements within a *nadu*. The terms *veḷḷan-vagai* and *brahmadeya* refer to categories of major recipients of agricultural income: *veḷḷan vagai*, a sharing of agricultural income among cultivating peoples, peasant families comprising the various *urar* of the *nadu*;[4] *brahmadeya*, a sharing of income among Brahman families under the authority of the *sabha*. Appropriately, the control of the *urar*, or *urgaḷilār* as it was also called, comprehended all lands not under the authority of the *sabha*, including Hindu temple land (*dēvadāna*), those lands from which income supported Jaina shrines (*paḷḷic-candan*), and Vedic sacrifices conducted outside of temples or 'public works' (*veṭṭapperu*).[5] In all of these cases, as well as that involving arable lands around trade centres under some degree of merchant *nagarattār* control, the dominant peasantry of the locality distributed the proceeds of cultivation according to the deeds of gift specified in inscriptions, or according to customary payments and dues to groups associated with agrarian production from the lowliest labourer to the most skilled craftsman and the locality overlord.

[4] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 570-80; Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 152-4; *veḷḷan-vakai*, according to the *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, is 'that which belongs to the vēḷāḷa class, as lands in a village', p. 3793, citing a South Indian inscription.

[5] *E.I.*, v. 22, no.34, 'Larger Leiden Plates', p. 231; the meaning of *veṭṭapperu* is doubtful.

Carefully and ceremonially demarcated from the most fertile and productive lands were the fields under the authority of the Brahman *sabha*. Within a locality, or *nadu*, there may have been several Brahman villages, some very large, others smaller. These were easily identified by their names and references to the *sabha* and often to the fact that the village was called a *brahmadeya*. Brahman villages of this period were referred to by a variety of terms beside *brahmadēya: chaturvēdimaṅgalam, maṅgalam, agaram, agrahāram, agra-brahmadēya, agra-brahmadēsa, brahmadēsam, brahmapuri*, and *brahma-maṅgalam*.[6] Of these, only *agrahāram* seems to have conveyed a substantially different meaning within the general meaning of *brahmadeya*, 'a donation to Brahmans'. *Agrahāram* appears to have been more often used in inscriptions to designate a set of privileges held by Brahmans living in villages over which they did not enjoy the same dominance as the Brahmans of *brahmadeyas*.[7] The usage is more common in the inscriptions of Karnataka and, in general, during the period after the thirteenth century when the importance of *brahmadeyas* was much reduced and therefore may reflect only a change in the circumstances of landed Brahmans under the altered agrarian conditions of a later period.[8] An alternative means of identifying Brahman villages was by reference to assemblies through which these great villages were governed. Thus, inscriptions refer to the *sabha* and *mahasabha*, or use the equivalent Tamil terms, *kuṟi* and *perunguṟi*, or *perunguṟimakkaḷ*, 'the great men of the assembly'.[9]

Brahman assemblies with their functional committees, or offices (*vāriyams*), through which control and supervision were

[6] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, p. 140; *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, 'Glossary'.

[7] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 6; Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, p. 158n, cites F.W. Ellis (*Replies to Seventeen Questions Proposed by the Government of Fort George Relative to Mirasi Right; with Two Appendices*, Government Gazette Office, Madras, 1818, p. xxv, n.8, to the effect that *agra* means 'before' and *harati* 'it is taken' which is understood to be the grant of village income to Brahmans which would otherwise constitute a revenue payment. However, Ellis used *agrahara* to refer to villages which paid a full revenue as well as those which paid part or no *'inam'*. Relative to *mēlvāram*, where *mēl* = before any other or first, see n.75 below.

[8] On *agraharas* of Karnataka *see* G.S. Dikshit, *Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka*, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1964, chs. 5 and 6, where the contrast with Coromandel Brahman villages, though not explicit, is striking; also, K.R. Basava Raja, 'Agraharas in Medieval Karnataka', *Journal of the Karnatak University (Humanities)*, v. 2 (1970), pp. 106-14.

[9] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 82n; Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, p. 138.

exercised, do not appear to have existed before the Pallava period, though Brahmans living among peasants in their villages and upon a share of peasant production dates from an early time.[10] Not until the eighth century are there records which refer to the means of selection and scope of functions of the Brahman assemblies. A Pandyan inscription of A.D. 782 from Mananilanallur (modern Manur near Tirunelveli), a *brahmadeya* in Kalakkudi-nadu, may be among the very first of those records which anticipate the elaborate organization described more fully in the Uttaramerur inscriptions of Chingleput district.[11] The purpose of the *brahmadeya* was to provide a reliable source of support to Brahmans for the pursuit of their sacral responsibilities, and the gift (Sanskrit: *dāna* or *dēya*) of arable land, part of the proceeds from which constituted a stream of income to learned Brahmans, was one of the major sources of merit to pious Hindus.[12] In order to achieve this objective, reliable and substantial wealth had to exist to be placed at the disposal of Brahman assemblies. Merely providing for the subsistence of the Brahman populations of some of the great Brahman villages assumed very advanced productive agriculture.

The population of a place like Uttaramerur during the tenth century, according to the Parantaka I inscriptions of A.D. 919 and 922, must have been very large if the elaborate rules for selecting holders of the village offices (*vāriyam*) were even partially followed. These rules provided for the selection of forty-two members of the *mahasabha* to serve on five committees, twelve on the annual and garden committees and six on the tank, assessment,[13] and gold committees. Each of the *mahājana*s, or members of the great

[10] Minakshi, op. cit., p. 121; Sathianathaier, op. cit., pp. 34-5; and K.M. Gupta, *The Land System in South India Between c. 800 A.D. and 1200 A.D.*, Motilal Banarsidass, Lahore, 1933, pp. 30-1; N. Subrahmaniam, *Śaṅgam Polity*, pp. 255 ff.

[11] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 81-2.

[12] P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law)*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1941, v. 2., pt 2, ch. 25; Appadorai, op. cit., v. l, p. 156; and note the term *dāna khaṇḍa*, in *E.I.*, v. 14, p. 97, A.D. 1369, referring to the merit of constructing tanks.

[13] Some of the terms used in connection with committees are unclear; for example, *pañcavāra-vāriyam* which is interpreted by Nilakanta Sastri to be related to 'the function of assessment (*Cōḷa Studies*, p. 142-3) and by Sathianathaier as 'Standing committee' (op. cit., p. 33; *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2) 'Glossary', takes both positions it appears (pp. viii-xlii) while K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer (*E.I.*, v. 23, p. 22) favours the first.

assembly, selected for membership of the committees had to meet rigorous qualifications and be free of specified disabilities. The qualifications were those of age (between 37 and 70 years), Vedic learning and teaching experience, and minimum property expressed as a share of the lands possessed by the Brahmans of the place; disabilities involved having served on the *sabha* in the previous three years, being shown derelict in the execution of previous offices (a disability which extended to other agnatic and affinal kin as well), having committed the sin of incest or other similarly serious transgressions as theft, consuming polluted food without having undergone purificatory rites, and having been adjudged an 'enemy of the village (*grāmakaṇṭaka*)'. Considering these restrictions and the rotational rules on balloting, a village like Uttaramerur would have had a large population in order to provide anything approaching an adequate panel of candidates. Yet, this village was not great in size; it measured less than five-eighths of a mile from east-to-west and one-half mile from north-to-south during the tenth century.[14] In 1932, Nilakanta Sastri reported a population of 11,000; its population in 1961 was 13, 879.[15]

Distinctions among Brahman villages must be recognized notwithstanding the fragmentary knowledge which exists about them. It is certainly clear that all Brahman villages in South India were not like Uttaramerur, by which Brahman villages have been measured, not only in South India, but elsewhere in India.[16] There were, first, other settlements like Uttaramerur which maintained a set of central place functions, in which authority was most elaborately organized among Brahman residents, and in which the most persistent relations with the great overlords of the region — the Cholas and their allies — obtained. However, the extant evidence suggests that Brahman villages of the Chola period ranged in size from those which may have been the largest settlements on the plain to quite small villages, just as they ranged in social com-

[14] Based upon the locations of the major temples referred to by contemporary inscriptions in the modern village, *see* Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 98-9. These are mentioned in *S.I.I.*, v. 6, pp. 273-325, 238-335, 336-8, 339, 340, 341-3, 376-7; Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 2, p. 215.

[15] *Census of 1961, IX, Madras District Census Handbook; Chingleput*, v. 2, p. 305; the Uttaramerur Panchayat Union population was 92, 773, p. 307.

[16] Note particularly this assumption in Dikshit, op. cit., p. 98.

position from those with a large proportion of Brahman families to those with a few. The residence site of a Brahman village might comprise over two square miles, as in the case of Uttaramerur, which was subdivided into twelve sections (*cēri*s) and thirty smaller divisions called *kuḍumbus*.[17] Another internal division of this and other important Brahman settlements may have been according to sect or to occupational grouping; it was called *saṅkarappāḍi*, and may have included only non-Brahman residents of these villages.[18]

Size reflected the location and the circumstances under which the gift of village income was conferred upon a group of Brahman families. Those extensive tracts with relatively well-developed, reliable irrigation facilities, as in deltaic portions of the plain, or similarly large areas whose surface configuration and drainage characteristics made possible large, perennial tanks, provided the condition and the requirement for large peasant villages. Isolated parts of the rest of the macro region provided the same possibilities,

[17] This estimate of the area is based upon the location of temple markers (n. no.14). *Cēri* names in Uttaramerur appear to be based upon twelve names of Vishnu thus suggesting the clustering of Brahman families according to their ritual functions (Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 2, p. 273; Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 103n). In another case of the eleventh century, Alambakkam, alias Madhurantakam-chaturvēdimaṅgalam, about twelve miles south-east of Uttaramerur, *cēri*s seem to be named for other Brahman villages, suggesting colonization from places, or they were named for previous Chola rulers using their surnames as many Brahman villages did (*A.R.E.*, 1910, para. 25, referring to 726/1909). An inscription of Kulottunga I seems to support the latter theory of *cēri* names based upon royal titles (Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, pt 2, p. 560). The meaning of *kuḍumbu* is unclear. Usually translated as 'ward' as by Nilakanta Sastri (*The Cōḷas*, pp. 496, 502, 517n.), the term is obviously better understood as a reference to 'lineage' or, as used by Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'family groups' *in Historical Sketches . . .* (v. 2, pp. 273-86 and *passim*); also see *kuṭumpi* in *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 2, p. 974. *Kuḍumbu* was also used among peasants to constitute what appears to be work units; see below, ch. 6, n. no.24.

[18] At Tiruvalangadu, in A.D. 1072, an inscription refers to a portion of that large temple centre called the *śaṅkarappāḍi* and describes the shifting of twenty-five families of oil-mongers from there to another part of the settlement and the requirement that they provide oil for fifteen temple lamps (14/1896, in Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, v. 2, p. 272n.). Still other references to this residential grouping come from Ūdaiyargudi (Chidambaram taluk) which refers to the *śaṅkarappāḍi* of Kadambur (550/1920, *S.I.I.*, v. 13, no.58, pp. 26-7) and Sivapuram (Sriperumbudur taluk, Chingleput) (*A.R.E.*, 1960, no. 284, A.D. 1030; also *see* François Gros and R. Nagaswamy, *Uttaramerur: Legendes, Histoire, Monuments*, Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry, 1970, p. 98.

but it was in the coastal plain portion of the macro region, the areas of the most ancient peasant settlement, that most Brahman villages, large and small, were established. Of the smaller Brahman settlements less is known of course, for it is from inscriptions alone that anything is known of any Brahman villages, and the number of inscriptions is clearly correlated with the size and importance of a place. Thus, most of the Brahman villages of the macro region have left an insufficient record upon which to estimate even relative size. Whereas in a place like Uttaramerur, procedures for the selection of members for service on one of the functional committees of the *mahasabha* are explicit, the presumption of a relatively large Brahman population is unavoidable. Similarly, where a village was granted as *brahmadeya* to a large number of Brahman families — even if, as is often the case, the number was a conventional one like '108' families — it was only a matter of time before the Brahman population would have become substantial.[19] Many extant records refer to *brahmadeya* grants to smaller groups of Brahmans, including those to single persons (*ēkabhōgam*).[20] In the latter case, the descendants of the original donee would have constituted a minor fraction of the population of a village, the major share of whose income they enjoyed, and probably lived on a single street much as Brahmans of the *agrahāram* section of modern South Indian villages do.

The proportion of Brahmans of the macro region who did not live in these villages is among the important issues in the social history of early South India which have never been raised. It is certainly significant to know — or at least to speculate about — the extent to which Brahmans resided and were part of the society outside of Brahman villages. That most did seems beyond question.

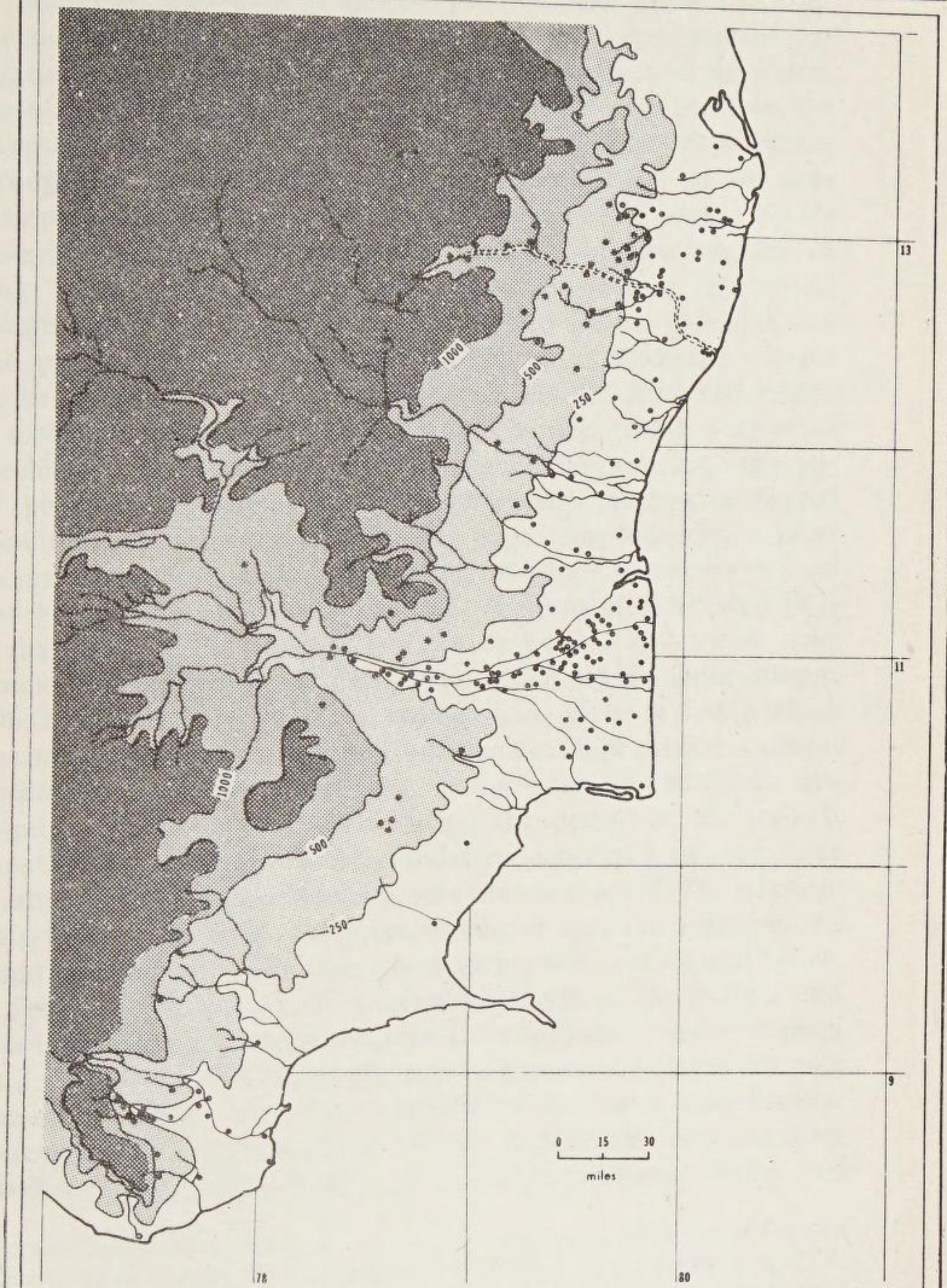
[19] Srivillipputtur, a Brahman village in the northern part of modern Tirunelveli was established as a *brahmadeya* for 108 Brahmans in the late eighth or early ninth century (T.K.T. Viraraghavacharya, 'The Srivilliputtur Temple of Sudikkodutta Nachchiyar', *Tirupati-Tirumalai Devasthanam Bulletin*, v. 6, no.3, pp. 1-2). This number is very common, though there are other multiples of twelve which are often encountered as well; e.g. the village of Korraparru in the Kistna delta, established as a *brahmadeya* in the middle of the eighth century, certainly one of the earliest, was granted to twenty-four Brahmans (*S.I.I.*, v. 1, no.35, pp. 31-6). See ch. 6, n. no.9.

[20] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xiv; grants to individual Brahmans who might later redistribute shares of income among other Brahmans seems to have occurred more frequently, indeed characteristically, in Karnataka than in the Coromandel plain (Dikshit, op. cit., pp., 100-1).

Villages under the control of a Brahman assembly were being created throughout the Chola period; small or large groups of Brahman families came into new residential quarters of established and prosperous settlements from other peasant settlements near and far, constituted themselves as a *sabha*, and corporately managed the landed wealth which had been bestowed. It appears reasonable to suggest that many more Brahmans continued to live in non-Brahman villages as indeed they had in the period before Pallava times when the establishment of such settlements gained great prominence. If this supposition is correct, it cannot be argued that life in the great Brahman villages, such as Uttaramerur, constituted the ordinary way of life of the sacerdotal élite of the macro region in this age. On the contrary, it must be supposed that, as most Brahmans lived in prosperous peasant villages in the way they had in the past, perhaps in a special quarter in the vicinity of a Vedic temple, their life-styles would have been close to those of the peasants and artisans among whom they lived. Life-styles of Brahman and peasant, under the circumstances of long-termed residential propinquity as well as the tendency in this period of the latter to emulate the ways of the Brahmans, cannot have varied substantially. The implication of this line of speculation is that it would be false to exaggerate the gap between Brahmans and those peasant groups with whom they shared a common rural social context and culture.

Map IV-1 shows a distribution of some 300 Brahman villages of the Chola period. It cannot be claimed to be a complete representation of Brahman villages of the period for new ones come to light with new publications of South Indian inscriptions, and all of them may never be known. Beyond that, many of the known Brahman villages of the period cannot be located with enough certainty to make their notice useful, and others cannot be located at all. Still others which could have been plotted were not because they were parts of clusters of such villages, discernable only on large-scale maps.[21] In Map IV-1, it will be seen that the distribution of Brahman villages conforms to the ecotypic conditions most

[21] As with all other distributions of medieval South India, the accidents of preservation and discovery of *brahmadeya* village inscriptions determines the extent of possible identification and location. Lacking either local or *supra* local listings of Brahman villages at particular times and places, the universe of such places which can be positively identified and dated must be considered as partial. In the famous



IV-1 *Brahmadeya* Distribution *c.* A.D. 1300

favourable to Coromandel agriculture. The most significant concentrations occur in the riverine tracts of the Kaveri and its tributaries, the Ponnaiyar, the western Tambraparni, and the Palar. Most of the Brahman villages lie below the 250 foot contour, the exceptions being only those which follow the major river basins through the graded descent from higher elevations to the sea-level plain below. Very few Brahman villages are found at higher elevations where reliable irrigation sources, whether riverine or tank, could rarely be developed. Even considering the partial nature of the distribution shown, the map points to significant and predictable aspects of the relationship of Brahman villages to the agrarian structure. One of these is that the Brahman village is a reliable and accurate 'marker' of the most mature agrarian localities in the macro region. The high consumption requirements of these villages were supportable only under the most advanced conditions of agriculture. Moreover, these same localities, it must be presumed, bore the highest burden of tribute payments to local and great overlords. The second fact demonstrated by Map IV-1 is that most of the *nadu*s which can be located had within their boundaries, and usually at their core, one or more Brahman villages. This is evident from records of *brahmadeya*s of the period in which the name of the *nadu* in which the Brahman village existed is almost invariably given. N. Karashima, in his work on the Chola inscriptions, has suggested that during the period of Rajaraja I, most of the *nadu*s of Cholamandalam contained two or three Brahman villages; in some there were four or more.[22] The relationship between the *nadu*, the primary unit of agrarian organization, and these prestigious Brahman settlements will be discussed below.

Previous research on the Brahman villages of the Pallava and Chola periods has treated each as an independent, self-contained unit. The effect of this has been to homogenize all villages in which the *sabha* existed. It has been suggested above that a more realistic perception of Brahman villages is that they varied from the most modest, hazardously supported, village settlements, under the

Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajarajesvara temple, of the twenty-ninth year of Rajaraja I, a great many villages are listed to supply functionaries for the temple (e.g., *S.I.I.*, v. 2, no. 69, pp. 312 ff); this is exceptional in the extent of the many villages mentioned, but the total number of iocality villages are not.

22 'The Power Structure of the Cola Rule', Paper presented to the II International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, Madras, 5 January 1968, p. 3 and app.

control of a *sabha*, to a class of great, populous, and wealthy Brahman-dominated enclaves within a micro region, of which Uttaramerur was a conspicuous member. Of this latter class, it would appear that perhaps thirty-five constituted premier settlements by reason of their size and the impressive array of central place functions.

'Central place' Brahman settlements were sometimes designated as *taṉiyūr*, literally 'separate settlement', or, as scholars have at times suggested, 'free-' or 'independent-settlement'.[23] Among such places are the following: Madhurantakam, Tirumukkudal and Uttaramerur in modern Chingleput district; Tribhuvani in Pondicherry; and Chidambaram and Ennayiran in modern South Arcot. *Taṉiyūr* settlements are often referred to as constituting a minor and separate division of the *nadu* in which they were: *taṉkūṟu*.[24]

A more reliable measure of the special status of the central-place Brahman settlement than such designations, however, was the various functions which many of them carried out. Among these, the most conspicuous and, perhaps, important were religious and ritual functions. The privileges enjoyed by Brahman families in these villages were derived from sacral activities for which they alone could be responsible. From the earliest *brahmadeya* inscriptions, there appear to have been a regular set of ritual functions for which learned Brahmans were responsible and for which support was given. These included: *adhyayanam* or *archanā*, the recitation of Vedas; *bhārati* or *bhāratavritti*, recitation of the *Mahabharata*; *panchangam*, calendrical activities to provide the auspicious times for marriages, festivals, and ploughing; *purāṇam*, recitation of *purāṇa*; in addition there were payments for teaching the Vedas to other Brahmans, *vēdavritti*; and payments to support learned Brahmans, *bhaṭṭavritti*.[25] Most of these activities were carried out in temples, and all such villages had at least one temple to provide the *locus* for these and other ritual activities. During the tenth century, most temples were identified in the inscriptions simply as 'the *mahādēva* temple' of some particular

[23] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 150-1; *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. lxiii.

[24] Uttaramerur was called a *taṉiyūr* and *taṉ-kūṟu* in the famous A.D. 921 inscription of Parantaka I (Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 99, 171). Tirukkalukunram (Chingleput taluk) is also designated as *tan-kūru*; *E.I.*, v. 3, no.38B, dated A.D. 919.

[25] Ibid., pp. 118, 125-7; S. Sundararaja Iyengar, *Land Tenures in the Madras Presidency*, Commercial Press, Madras, 1921, p. 213.

village, reflecting the greater prominence of Saivite religious activities over Vaishnavite at the time. After the tenth century, however, many Brahman villages had several temples, most of which continued to be Saivite shrines and all under the management of the *sabha* which supervised and supported the educational and ritual activities of each. By the twelfth century, most of the temples had come to be managed by special bodies, separate from the *sabha*, and fully capable of receiving endowments of money and land for the maintenance of the shrine. This independence was to weaken the Brahman assembly after the twelfth century.

Special hagiographical importance is attached to most of the great Brahman settlements as ancient, important Saivite places, celebrated in the lines of the devotional hymns of the *nāyanārs* and often prominent in the lives of the sect's saints. Examples of these are: Takkolam, Tiruvallam, Alangudi, Tillaisthanam, Tirukkadaiyur, Tiruvidaimarudur, Kilpalavur, Tiruppalatturai, Nallur.[26] Others were among the most sacred places of the Vaishnavas, the '108 sacred places (*nuttettu tirupati*)': Tirrukkoyilur, Kumbakonam, Tirunaraiyur, Tiruchchirai, Tirumayam, Shiyali, Koviladi, Kandiyūr, Adanur, Tirukkurungudi, Srivaikuntam, Srivilliputtūr, Kilanbil, Uraiyur, Tiruvellarai.[27] Some of these places, like Tirukkoyilur and Kumbakonam, were equally sacred to both of the major sects, and in all of them were one or more temples which were rated among the most important in the macro region.[28] In fact, it was only in such great Brahman settlements and in the few towns like Kanchi, Tanjavur, and Gangaikondacholapuram — important centres of Chola authority — that personnel and resources for the increasingly elaborate rituals of the times could be supported. Thus, Uttaramerur had two Vishnu and five Siva temples, Nallur had two Vishnu and four Siva temples, and Ennayiram is said in an inscription of A.D. 1037 to have had twelve Vedic temples and village shrines.[29]

[26] These are most conveniently found in V. Rangacharya, *A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency* (Collected till 1915), 3 vols., Government Press, Madras, 1919. The volume and page are provided here: v. 1: 512, 37, 73; v. 2: 1359, 1413, 1308, 1265; v. 3: 1614, 1617, 1580 [Cited hereafter as *IMP*].

[27] Ibid., v. 1, p. 512; P.V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Shrines*, The Madras Times Printing and Publishing Co., Madras, 1920, pp. 221-30.

[28] *IMP*, v. 1, p. 226; v. 2, p. 1235.

[29] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 101, 85; *A.R.E.*, 1917, no.335, dated A.D.

Central *brahmadeya*s appeared to maintain an elaborate and enduring network of relationships with other institutions in South India. They were places of record in a society in which there were few other means for recording and preserving important public facts. Among such facts would be those related to the great warrior houses of the time including, but not limited to, royal families. Important officers of the Chola overlords are panegyrized in long inscriptions, the purport of which was to provide a gift to a temple or to some Brahmans. These great *kāvya* inscriptions in Sanskrit as well as other languages must be considered as a form of public notice of an essentially non-religious nature notwithstanding their ostensible purpose.[30] The efficacy of incising public notices in these settlements derived from their attraction for large numbers of people participating in periodic religious ceremonies and other activities, including educational, economic, and political.

Most Brahman villages, however modest, carried out at least a limited set of educational functions; the central Brahman villages were the premier educational centres of the time. *Matha*s, or seminaries, of considerable size as well as individual teachers were provided with regular income by the *sabha*s. While such grants to individual teachers are among the most commonly recorded in the inscriptions of the macro region, evidence relating to centres of advanced learning involving many people are more rare. An inscription of A.D. 1048 refers to 260 students and twelve teachers at Tribhuvani; a record at Ennayiram, somewhat earlier, mentions 370 students of which most were junior in status, the rest, perhaps seventy, being regarded as senior scholars of Vedas and Prabhandas; in addition there were fourteen teachers.[31] Both of these inscriptions specify the allotments of food-grains to each of the several classes of persons associated with the schools. At Tiruvadutturai, a school for medical and grammatical training was provided with lands by a military officer (*sēnāpati*) from which the *sabha* exempted all dues.[32] These activities — individual scholars

1037; *idem*, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 563; *Madras District Gazetteers*, *South Arcot*, ed. B.S. Baliga, Government of Madras, Madras, 1962, p. 483.

[30] John F. Fleet, one of the early epigraphists in India (government epigraphist, 1883-6) recognized the public notice function of these records, a fact insufficiently recognized by modern scholars (cited in *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 164).

[31] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 630-1; *A.R.E.*, 1917, no.333 and *A.R.E.*, 1919, no.176.

[32] Ibid., p. 632; *A.R.E.*, 1925, no.159.

expounding particular portions of brahmanical knowledge as the Mimamsa of Prabharkara or larger groups of scholars pursuing more varied subjects — were at the core of the purpose of the Brahman village. The clientele of this tuition were Brahman youths just as the instructors were Brahmans, and toward the objective of transmission of this sacred and semi-sacred lore, the *sabha*s of Brahman settlements maintained a broad network of relationships with other, minor, Brahman villages, as well as non-Brahman settlements.

Mercantile and artisan groups comprised an important segment of the population of the central Brahman settlements. As populous places which attracted pilgrims from near and far, there were profitable opportunities open to both groups. A unique temple like the Rajarajesvara shrine at Tanjavur cannot, of course, be the measure of the scale of operations extant in other, smaller places, for it was a special monument of one of the greatest of the Chola warriors, Rajaraja I. Thus, its employment of over 600 temple servants, according to an A.D. 1011 record, included musicians, accountants, and various kinds of artisans as well as ritual functionaries and teachers. Tanjavur must be regarded as unusual.[33] The magnitude of mercantile and artisan activity at most central Brahman settlements was certainly more modest, yet integrally related to the pilgrimage custom of these centres. Temples of the central Brahman settlements were consumers of large quantities of goods, many of which could not be provided locally. Various kinds of condiments, oils, and the ephemera of ritual offerings had often to be acquired from distant places.[34]

Principally, central Brahman settlements are to be identified by the number of inscriptions found in them which pertain to the affairs of other places. Anticipating the great temple centres of the later medieval period in South India, when important events of the locality, territory, and kingdom were registered in the lengthy *prasasti*s of inscriptions, the central Brahman settlements were repositories of local public notice. In the course of a half century of epigraphical collection by archaeologists of the Government of India and several of the larger Indian States, such as

[33] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 275-6; *S.I.I.*, v. 2, no.66; and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'The Economy of a South Indian Temple in the Cola Period', *Malaviya Commemoration Volume*, ed. A.B. Dhruva, Banaras Hindu University, Banaras, 1932.

[34] Camphor is one such material, Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, p. 288.

Mysore, Travancore, and Hyderabad,[35] most of the macro region has been surveyed, thousands of inscriptions copied, and many of them published. Though the resultant record is incomplete, it is possible to identify some of the places which occupied a central recording function in relation to other locality institutions.

One turns inevitably to Uttaramerur, the place with perhaps the largest number of *sabha* inscriptions (over ninety) of any Brahman settlement — indeed, any village — in South Asia; it is moreover one of the most studied of ancient Indian settlements, the most recent and excellent example being the work of F. Gros and R. Nagaswamy.[36] Here, two early, undated records of the ninth century refer to endowments in support of two temples, characteristically identified simply as *māhādēva*, or Siva, temples in villages of the locality. One was in the village of Tiruppulivalam, 3.5 miles north of Uttaramerur on the main road to the Cheyyar river;[37] the other was Tittatur, modern Tittalam, about 5.5 miles south-east of Uttaramerur.[38] The endowment for the temple at Tiruppulivalam was made by the residents of the non-Brahman quarter (*śaṅkarappāḍi*) of the north-east bazaar (*vaḍakilaṅgāḍi*) of Uttaramerur with the consent of the *mahasabha*, whereas the grant to Tittatur was made directly by the latter. These neighbouring villages were clearly not Brahman villages, but Tiruppulivalam may have been a village whose major share of income had been granted to a temple in Uttaramerur (i.e., *dēvadāna*). Similar to these is the complex and interesting record of Uttaramerur, dated A.D. 1133, in which a temple of the village, or one nearby, having demanded repayment of a loan which had been made to the Uttaramerur assembly, and the latter, being without funds to meet the payment, including accumulated interest, transferred the share of income enjoyed by the *mahasabha* from a

[35] B. Lewis Rice (ed.), *Epigraphia Carnatica*, 12 vols., Mangalore and Bangalore, 1886-1905; *Travancore Archaeological Series*, v. 1, Madras, 1910-13; v. 2, ff., Trivandrum; *Hyderabad Archaeological Reports*, Calcutta, 1915; now superseded by the *Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series*, Hyderabad.

[36] Op. cit.

[37] *A.R.E.*, 1898, no.79, Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 120; Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 2, p. 214.

[38] *A.R.E.*, 1898, no.4; Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 120; Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 2, p. 231. Others mentioned in the neighbourhood of Uttaramerur are: Adalampundi (Anarampundi), 3.1 miles SE. of Uttaramerur, ibid., p. 235; Puliyur, 2.1 miles SE. (ibid., p. 237), and Marudattur (Marudam), 3.5. miles NE. (ibid., p. 254). Also, Gros and Nagaswamy, op. cit.

neighbouring village, Vennakuttanallur, to the temple in order to discharge the debt.[39]

Several points deserve notice in this record. One is that this is an example of a Brahman village assembly — one of the greatest in the macro region — having become so indebted to temple authorities, in their own and in other villages, that they were compelled to divest themselves of a portion of their own income sources. This phenomenon is general during the twelfth century, and it constitutes irrefutable evidence of the decline of the great Brahman villages by that time. The other point of interest in this A.D. 1133 inscription is that there was a provision that the name of the village transferred from the Brahman village to the temple, Vennakuttanallur, a name derived from one of the appellations of the god Krishna, a Vishnu deity, should henceforth be known by the Saivite name, Tiruvekambanallur.[40] The change was not a lasting one; the village of Vennakuttan still exists in Madhurantakam taluk of Chingleput district. Still another Uttaramerur inscription, of A.D. 1018, relates a transaction of the *mahasabha* with four Vaishnava priests of the Vaikanasa school in which they were assured of income in Uttaramerur by a grant of income shares for temple worship (*archanāvritti*) to compensate them for the loss of their income in the distant Brahman village of Arasanimangalam (modern Cuddalore taluk, South Arcot district).[51] This record demonstrates, as many of the eleventh century do, the widespread network of a great settlement like Uttaramerur, in this case about fifty miles, and also the spatial mobility of priestly families during this and subsequent ages. That it was not only Brahmans who were capable of cooperation in the affairs of the great Brahman villages is clear from another eleventh century inscription from Uttaramerur in which one of its merchants, a resident of what appears to be a Vaishnava quarter of the village, Govindacheri, together with a merchant of the central bazar (*naḍuvilaṅgāḍi*) of Uttaramerur, jointly endowed a temple lamp in Uttaramerur.[42]

The same pattern of relationship between other Brahman and

[39] *A.R.E.*, 1898, no.68; Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 128.

[40] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xli.

[41] *A.R.E.*, 1923, no.171; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 544.

[42] This is probably mistaken for the modern Valaṅgadi village, *A.R.E.*, 1923, no.187; Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 124. *See*, Gros and Nagaswamy, op. cit., p. 91.

non-Brahman peasant settlements can be shown for other central Brahman villages. From Tribhuvani, in modern South Arcot, a *mahasabha* order of A.D. 1028 altered the status of a village named Varakkur, a *dēvadāna* village, into one in which forty-eight cultivators were assigned full rights over the production of the village save only a continued and specified payment to a particular temple and the responsibility for maintaining the tank of the village.[43] An A.D. 1113 inscription by order of the Tribhuvani *mahasabha* directed that a group of its village-servants — priests, carpenters, accountants, and others — must desist in the practice of plying their crafts in other locality settlements.[44] This restriction is interesting in the light of an earlier Tribhuvani *mahasabha* order which granted an income from agricultural land to a goldsmith, presumably to assure his services to the Brahman village.[45] In Tanjavur, the central Brahman village of Tiruvadutturai (Mayavaram taluk) maintained a close relationship with several villages from which income in support of one of the Tiruvadutturai temples was obtained or from which consumables for ritual offerings, such as coconut and flowers, were obtained. The Brahman village of Sattanur, about three miles from Tiruvadutturai in modern Kumbakonam taluk, existed as a satellite for these purposes for almost two centuries, it would appear. Several inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries suggest the close interaction which must have obtained between the large and ancient Brahman village and its small neighbouring settlement.[46] By A.D. 1018, Sattanur, already a Brahman village, underwent a name change to *abhayāśraya chaturvēdimaṅgalam*, suggesting that the community of Brahmans of the place were in high esteem as scholars; yet, the *sabha* continued to register some of its inscriptions, as of old, in the village of Tiruvadutturai.[47] Other satellite Brahman villages associated with Tiruvadutturai in some of the same ways were: Sirupuliyur (Nannilam taluk) and Sirranaichchur (Mayavaram taluk).[48] The numerous inscriptions of Tiruvaduttu-

[43] 189/1919 *in* Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 557.

[44] 205/1919 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, p. 595.

[45] 210/1919 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 585, undated, but probably of the period from A.D. 1018-54.

[46] 135/1925 and 127/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, pp. 355, 396; and 120/1925, 102/1925, 150/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, pp. 485, 543, 592 respectively.

[47] 102/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 543 and 147/1925 in ibid., v. 2., p. 567.

[48] For the former, 107/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, p. 391 and 111/1925 and others

rai suggest an impressive network of relationships with other settlements in this densely populated portion of the delta. From the non-Brahman village of Karanur, some ten miles from Tiruvadutturai, income from land was given to maintain a temple lamp in A.D. 1017; a year later a Brahman village neighbouring Karanur, Peravur, undertook to provide regular income to a temple in Tiruvadutturai in return for a lump-sum payment.[49] Other *brahmadeya* villages in regular relationship with Tiruvadutturai were: Tiruvilimilalai, five miles to the south (Nannilam taluk); Tiraimur; Tiruvidaimardur, five miles south-west whose merchant assembly (*nagarattār*) participated in the purchase and gift of a substantial portion of land to the Tiruvadutturai temple in A.D. 942; and Palaivanavanmadevi-chaturvedimangalam about sixteen miles west of Tiruvadutturai from which the income from some land was purchased in A.D. 1016 to support physicians in the latter place.[50] Arrangements similar to these could easily be evinced for many other Brahman villages.[51]

Beyond these transactions between central Brahman villages and other settlements involving transfers of rights over agrarian wealth, loans and gifts, specialists recruited and in some cases restricted, these great institutions served as the most prominent locality site for the registration of events quite beyond the locality.

in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, pp. 434, 437; for the latter, 139/1925, 126/1925, 125/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, pp. 414, 423-4, 433; also *IMP*, v. 2, Tanjore, nos.600, 604.

[49] 102/1925 *in* Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 543.

[50] Karanur was said to be in Peravur-nadu, a territory named for its important Brahman village, Peravur (109/1925 and 102/1925 in *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 543; also 149/1895 and 113/1925 *in* ibid., v. 1, pp. 433, 537).

[51] Examples: a Tiruvalangadu inscription of A.D. 1124 records the sale of land by a *brahmadeya* called Valaikulama alias Nittavinoda-chaturvedimangalam for a lamp in Tiruvalangadu (485/1905 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 618). At Ennayiram in A.D. 1061 a village, part of whose income was previously used to maintain temple ritual, i.e. a *dēvadāna*, called Nannaderpakkam, of the temple at Eydar (modern Eydanur, Cuddalore taluk, South Arcot) was now to pay some portion of its income to a person as a life gift while the remainder was to be included in local revenue accounts (336/1917 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 652). Tiruvadatturai served this function for a number of settlements such as Tirunallam, 5 miles south, in which endowments were arranged to support *mathas* in Tiruvadatturai (Tirunilvaithankan-maṭha); (144/1925, dated A.D. 1101 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 581 and 155/1925, dated A.D. 1110 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 590). Others connected to Tiruvadatturai include Kottur, 30 miles south in Mannargudi taluk (152/1925, A.D. 116 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 599) and Siruppuliyur (62/1926, 69/1926, 71/1926, 107/1925 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 391).

Uttaramerur was called Rajendrachola-chaturvedimangalam during the reign of Rajendra I, and in the middle of the thirteenth century it was called Gandagopala-chaturvedimangalam for the Telugu-Chola overlord.[52] So general is the change of names of these great settlements to those based upon the personal name or surname of a ruler or his favoured deity as to suggest that between these villages and the most powerful warrior overlords of the macro region, a special relationship existed.

The presence of Chola authority in peasant micro regions is nowhere clearer than in the central Brahman villages, and the 'central' functions of such places are perhaps most dramatic when considered with reference to that authority. Not all central Brahman villages were equally influenced by kings; location appears to have affected the extent to which a settlement might be involved in the activities of the Chola overlords and their military officials. The important Brahman centres of Tribhuvani, Ennayiram, and Tiruvadutturai all contain inscriptions indicating that warriors serving the Cholas took part in the decisions of the respective *mahasabha*s as they related to agrarian matters. An A.D. 1053 record from Tribhuvani reported an order from a military official to the *sabha* directing that they alter the classification of dues upon some of the lands under *sabha* control, part of whose income was alienated to a temple.[53] Again, in A.D. 1099, the *sabha* was directed to provide lands for the cultivation of areca trees from which no dues were to be collected, and the *sabha* was instructed to replace the lost dues from other lands.[54] External intervention is again evidenced in an A.D. 1093 order to the Tribhuvani *sabha* that landholding arrangements involving what appears to be a military tenure (*parasavak-kāṇi*) be protected from the encroachment of non-military cultivators, in this case, potters.[55] Several inscriptions from Ennayiram of the eleventh and twelfth centuries also attest a significant degree of external authority over the affairs of the *sabha*, with soldiers instructing the assembly to provide income for temple rituals or being present when lands of the Brahman village were sold or the arrangements pertaining to the allocation

[52] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 99-100, 126.
[53] 188/1919 *in The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 583.
[54] 201/1919 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 577.
[55] 206/1919 *in* ibid., v. 2, p. 572; *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xliv.

of proceeds from land altered in some way.[56] An important record of A.D. 1001 from Tiruvadutturai relates that some money owed to temple weavers by the *sabha* was appropriated by 'the king', and the assembly, fearing that the weavers would migrate elsewhere if not paid, borrowed the sum from a temple in return for which it freed some *dēvadāna* lands of that temple from certain dues.[57] Apart from the evidence of arbitrary exactions to which a *mahasabha* might be exposed by those with power, this record indicates that the *mahasabha* could be placed in a position of jeopardy between these powerful outsiders and such village institutions as temples and artisan groups, all of whom maintained a degree of corporate strength with which the Brahmans of the *sabha* had to cope.

The temple at Sucindram, in Travancore, provides similar evidence of the displacement of the *mahasabha* which had managed the affairs of the temple from the middle of the tenth century. Under the supervision of a committee of the *mahasabha*, called the *mūlaparuda* as at other Saivite shrines, the following matters were attended: general financial management, the management of lands apportioned to the maintenance of the temple, the supervision of ritual and endowments, and the promulgation of orders relating to the temple. In the middle of the thirteenth century, the *mūlaparuda* committee of the *mahasabha* was displaced by a group of Malayali Brahmans called *yōgakkar* or *pōrris*, a priestly group which may have originated in the northern coastal area of Tulu-country, migrated to Travancore, and developed marital links with Nambudri Brahmans.[58]

Vulnerability to these pressures upon and against the *mahasabhas* seems to have been greater in the southern portions of the Coromandel plain than in its central and northern portions. In Tondaimandalam, judging from the inscriptions of Uttaramerur and those at the temple centre of Tiruvalangadu, which referred to *brahmadeya* affairs, these Brahman centres appeared to have preserved a greater degree of freedom from the intrusion of powerful warriors as well as less pressure from the internal power position of temple organizations. Distance from the Chola heartland in the

[56] 330 and 335/1917 *in The Cōḷas*, v. 1, pp. 276-7, 562; 348 and 351/1917 *in* ibid., v. 2, pp. 588, 596.

[57] 105/1925 *in* ibid., v. 1, p. 498.

[58] Pillay, *Sucīndram Temple*, pp. 143-50.

Kaveri may have been an important factor; another appears to be the greater diversity and corporate strength of groups in the central and northern plain.

Again, it is to the great Brahman village of Uttaramerur that one turns for evidence of well-organized corporate elements besides the Brahmans of the assembly comprising the settlement. A variety of such groups maintained their identity from the earliest period of the inscriptions to the latest. Among the most early are residential groups such as the people of *saṅkarappāḍi* and perhaps those of the twelve *cēris*; others include: *māhēśvaras*, *sthānattārs*, *periḷamaiyār*, *srāddhamantas*, *śrīvaishnavas*, *vīrgaṇattār*, *kaligaṇattār*, and *śrīkrishṇāgaṇapperumakkḷ*.[59] All of these groups are associated with temples, and they figure prominently in the affairs of the village as inscriptions reflect this. The composition of these groups is difficult to ascertain. In some cases, they suggest groups not capable of serving on or being represented in the *mahasabha*. For example, those of the *saṅkarappāḍi* were non-Brahmans as were the same group in Tiruvalangadu; the *periḷamaiyār* consisted of middle-aged women attached to temples; and the *vīragaṇattār* referred to Jainas.[60] The *mahasabha* of Uttaramerur appears to have been more successful than Brahman villages in the Kaveri basin in maintaining their authority and control over resources of the settlement from the expanding rights of temple organizations. In the Kaveri region, as noted, inscriptions of the twelfth century indicate that *sabhas* were often unable to resist the shift of greater economic power to temples which had in the past been entirely dependent on the assemblies of these villages. Thus, the Brahman village of Sattanur, although closely linked to the larger village of Tiruvadutturai, became for a time at least, a *tiruviḍaiyāṭṭam*; that is, its income was endowed to a Vishnu temple of Tiruvadutturai. This village was therefore under some influence from the temple.[61] A neighbouring Brahman village, Ilachchikudi, alias Vikramasinga-chaturvedimangalam, appears also to have made payments to the same temple, at least once on behalf of Sattanur.[62] Uttaramerur was not, of course, completely proof

[59] All of these were corporate groups involved in temple administration (Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 102).

[60] *Pēriḷamaiyār* may have been middle-aged women attached to temples (*S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. lii); *vīragaṇattā* may refer to Jainas of the village (ibid., p. xciv).

[61] 101/1925, dated A.D. 1009 *in* Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 513.

[62] *See* ibid.

against this encroachment of temple influence in *sabha* affairs judging from the need which this great assembly had to transfer its interests in the village of Vennakuttanallur to the Saivite shrine of Ekambam-udaiyar in repayment of a loan.[63] However, a century later, when the temple functionaries (*māhēśvaras* and *sthānattārs* of the Siva temple in Tiruppulivalam, nearby) demanded that the Uttaramerur *mahasabha* resume its obligation to maintain eight temple lamps, according to various endowments of the past for this purpose, the assembly was able to settle with the temple managers for a lower schedule of payments.[64] Thus, even Uttaramerur felt the growing pressure of temple demands by the thirteenth century.

This discussion of the central Brahman villages of the Chola period inevitably exaggerates their importance. In all, these great rural centres might have comprised about one-tenth of all Brahman settlements and only a minor fraction of the totality of rural settlements of all sorts. The cultural and religious significance of these relatively few places obscures the fact that most Brahman settlements were smaller and more modest in function; many were shadows — satellites — of those centres of civilization referred to here as central Brahman villages; and most were more closely integrated with culture and society of the *nadu* of which they were part. Of most Brahman villages, only their names and references to their Brahman assemblies and Vedic temples distinguish them from the more important peasant villages of the localities in which they were. Yet, every Brahman village, however modest and remote, was a centre of those cultural and social forms which gave to a locality an essential status element which its peasant people supported to the fullest extent that their resources permitted. If the Brahman village was a marker of the prosperous, peasant agrarian localities of the macro region, as has been suggested, then it was no less a social and cultural marker of the maturity and propriety of the collection of peasant groups comprising the *nattar*.

Relations between Brahman villages and the locality peasantry — *nattar* — have been touched upon in a variety of ways in this discussion. These relations are elusive, for they are not the subject of many inscriptions. Nor should it be expected that these relations would be elaborated in great detail in stone and copper records

[63] 68/1898, dated A.D. 1133 *in* Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 128.
[64] 67/1898, dated A.D. 1215 *in* Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 129-30.

of the time. Occasionally, of course, detailed data relating to grants are provided, but these are exceptional and, even then, much is left unspecified. Clearly, relationships involving the distribution of proceeds from arable land was a matter of the highest importance, and the absence of such details means that these relationships were either well enough known and fixed by usage or they were subject to a customary procedure or determination that permitted allocation and reallocation of income from the land without the need of a permanent record. Both of these suppositions are probably correct in some degree. In every peasant locality, the division of produce among those with rights to a share would have been well-established among locality folk. Wide variations in the absolute amounts which might be realized from shares had to be anticipated owing to several factors: the variations in cropping patterns and practices, the relationships between those who tilled and those who exercised dominance over the land, the shifting relationships between those directly involved in agricultural production and service groups, and finally, the relations between those with local dominance over the land and overlords — great and small — to whom some tribute was transmitted. The scope for arbitration and adjustment of share divisions would have had to be considerable. Agricultural output, then as now, would have been subject to seasonal variations, and tributary demands would vary according to the exigent requirements of local defence or perhaps the military, or to the enthusiastic piety of the ruler. Under these circumstances, the conclusion is inescapable that locality custom and established modes of adjudication to deal with the exigent would have obviated the need for detailed descriptions of many aspects of the agrarian relations between Brahman villages and the *nattar* of a locality.

Such references as are occasionally found in inscriptions seem to bear this out. Most inscriptions record that a donor, usually well-identified, provided land of an unspecified quality and quantity in a named village for the benefit of the god of a temple. Where other kinds of grants are made, there was a similar lack of specificity about precisely how the grant was to be realized. For example, many of the grants to temples during the tenth century, and even later, were to maintain lamps. George Spencer's analysis of such procedures is most valuable.[65] Grants usually specified the number

[65] George W. Spencer, 'Temple Money-Lending and Livestock Redistribution

of sheep or, at times, cattle, whose milk was to yield ghee as the fuel. At times, grants state that these animals were to be entrusted with a named village or person in a village whose responsibility was to supply the temple with the fuel; for the most part, not even this information is recorded. Lack of specificity about how, in what amounts, and by whom the gift of land, animals, or money were to be converted into the ritual service cannot be inferred to mean that there was indifference about these things. Certainly the donor cannot have been indifferent, nor should we assume, were those of the temple in charge of such matters. One can only conclude that in most cases the procedures for fulfilling such solemn obligations were well enough known and understood by all that there was no need to state them in the record of the grant.[66] It was probably sufficient for most pious donors to have the permanent record of their charity inscribed in stone, leaving to those responsible for temple affairs the proper execution of the grant in accordance with accepted procedures. It is only in the light of such unwritten and customary arrangements, understood by all of the locality folk involved in the support of the religious and educational activities of the Brahman village and temples, that the records of the Chola period can be understood.

In the larger sense, these unwritten, essentially customary ways of doing things indicate an important aspect of the relationship between the Brahman village and the peasantry among whom they existed. There was mutual confidence and respect between the two. Nilakanta Sastri, in discussing the relationship between the *sabha* and *ur* of Uttaramerur, has stated that '. . . a vague translation of *Ūr* and *Ūrōm* into "village" and "we, the inhabitants of the village" is hardly satisfactory'. Pointing out that the *ur* was an ancient locality organization, he goes on to argue that this body of peasants had a commanding voice within the locality in respect to many issues.[67] In several Uttaramerur *mahasabha* inscriptions,

in Early Tanjore', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, v. 5, pp. 277-93.

[66] Alternatively, there is some evidence that such matters were also recorded on more ephemeral materials, such as palm leaf (e.g. *A.R.E.*, 1961-62, no.449, A.D. 1106) where it is stated that white ants destroyed the palm leaf record and thus lost; this kind of procedure may have been followed often. However, to assume that much was left unwritten appears to be more plausible and conforms more realistically to what would be expected in an essentially non-literate society which most of those concerned would have comprised.

[67] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, pp. 103-4.

the *ur* of the locality undertook special responsibilities for temple endowments which involved the sale of rights over village land by the *ur* and the subsequent supervision of the endowment, under the general control of the *sabha*.[68] In another case, the *ur* of Uttaramerur assigned all the dues to which it was entitled from the southern hamlet, called Ulliyur, to a Saivite temple in that village.[69]

Where one must differ with Nilakanta Sastri about the relationship between such great Brahman villages as Uttaramerur and the locality peasantry is his assumption of the involuntary subordination of the peasantry as a consequence of external pressure:

> . . . the simplest explanation of the existence side by side, as in Uttaramērūr, of both the organizations is to suppose that the *Ūr* was the more ancient form and that the *Sabhā* came on top of it when, at the will of some king or chieftain, a considerable number of new Brahman residents . . . were settled in the village, and endowed with perpetual rights of property in a part of the village lands.[70]

There is no evidence to support the argument that the rights conferred upon Brahmans were extracted by force or the threat of force from the non-Brahman, peasant people of a locality. On the contrary, as even Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out, there is every indication that Brahmans were granted such rights as they possessed on a wholly voluntary basis by the dominant peasantry.[71] Further, the idea of conflict between the Brahman *sabha* and the peasant *ur*, speaking for the locality peasantry, is based upon the obviously diminished role of *ur* within the precincts of the *brahmadeya* village. This reduced scope of *ur* functions within a Brahman village, and presumably the complete elimination of the *ur* in some cases, did certainly occur, providing scope for the supervisory functions of the committees (*vāriyam*) of the *sabha*. However, the *ur* was not simply a village institution in the same sense as the *sabha*. The *urar* were members of a locality social system in which the village which was granted as *brahmadeya* was located. In ceasing to enjoy certain rights in these villages, they did not forfeit their

[68] Ibid., pp. 105-6.

[69] 41/1898, 9th C. *in* ibid., pp. 122-3.

[70] Ibid., p. 104.

[71] 'They [Brahmans] lived on voluntary gifts from all classes . . . and devoted themselves exclusively to learning, teaching, and writing. They showed themselves capable of detached thinking on social questions and provided patterns of ethical and religious conduct [and were] active helpers and disinterested arbitrators. . . .' (*Culture and History of the Tamil*, pp. 95-6).

prerogatives as members of locality society. The decline of the *ur* in Brahman villages did not mean a diminished capacity of its peasant constituents to exert authority in those settlements and over those lands beyond the jurisdiction of the *sabha*. The fallacy arises from viewing the relations between Brahmans and peasants within the framework of the individual village, when it was not the village, but the locality — the *nadu* — which was the primary unit of peasant organization. So long as the *nattar* were capable of acting together with effectiveness, as they were long beyond the time of the great Brahman villages, the village unit was a means for providing requisite self-government to non-peasant groups. The locality was dominated by peasant folk under the authority of locality chieftains, themselves drawn from peasant ranks and dependent upon peasant support. Brahmans were accordingly granted rights to be exercised under the *sabha*, and to assume that such village units were modal in character is to ignore the capability of the locality peasantry which, in the period after the twelfth century, showed itself to be increasingly able to exercise authority separate from such village bodies, on the one hand, and the great Chola overlords, on the other.

The extent of support for Brahmans and their ritual activities by the locality peasantry cannot be assessed with any reliability from existing records. There were variations from place to place in accordance with the number of Brahman families constituting beneficiaries of the *brahmadeya*, the relative fertility and agricultural potential of the lands granted, the elaborateness of ritual facilities, and support from other than local people. Under the terms of the inscriptional charters, Brahman villages realized their basic support from a grant of the major portion of income, or *'mēlvāram'* as it was called, produced from the lands around the newly constituted Brahman settlement. The *mēlvāram*, 'higher-share', was that which had been enjoyed by those with control over the locality of prosperous settlements from which the Brahman villages were necessarily created. The actual proportion of output represented by the *mēlvāram* is not specified in inscriptions, and there is no basis whatever for suggesting some regular proportion of output.[72]

[72] To suppose that the sastric injunction of 1/6th as the appropriate share to the king was followed, as some suggest, is baseless. Equally difficult to accept are such references as 1/5th for forest land and 1/3rd for rice land, as specified in the A.D. 1072 inscription of Kulottunga I, referred to above, as constituting a regular basis

Another portion of income to which reference is made is the *kīḻvāram*, 'lower-share', or the *kuḍivāram*, 'cultivator's-share'; this appears to have gone to those who actually supervised cultivation and perhaps took part in it. These income shares, *vāram*, were net proceeds since there were in addition numerous, other small dues to which reference is made in the inscriptions of the period which seemed to be in excess of these shares.[73] In most Brahman villages, it must be supposed, it was the 'higher-share' of the net proceeds from cultivation that went to the Brahman beneficiaries, and the former cultivators carried out their supervisory activities as before. This may be inferred from the references to an arrangement sometimes mentioned in which the previous cultivators are said to have been removed from the land and the village at the time of being granted.[74]

Displacement of those who supervised cultivation and received the *kīḻvāram*, or 'lower-share', appears to have been unusual. However, its occurence helps to explain the mention in many of the *mahasabha* inscriptions of specialized committees or offices of the assembly charged with the supervision of various aspects of cultivation.[75] Two of the important committees (*vāriyam*) of the Uttaramerur assembly were the tank committee (*ēri-vāriyam*) and the garden committee (*tōṭṭa-vāriyam*); service on these committees was considered a necessary qualification to service on the

for calculating the income of those who could extract a portion of peasant production.

[73] I am grateful to T.V. Mahalingam for permitting me to use a glossary of dues of this period which runs to 43 typed pages and presents a bewildering array of charges against peasant production in excess of such regular payments of *mēlvāram* and *kīlvāram* ('Unit for the Preparation of Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Madras and Kerala States: Epigraphical Glossary of Terms Relating to Taxes and other Dues, Customary and Feudal', Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, Madras, 1967). An important analysis of some of these terms is found in N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman, 'Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions', *Ajia Afurka Gengo Bunka Kenkyu* (Tokyo), no.5 (August 1972), pp. 87-117.

[74] This is expressed by the term *kuḍi-ningāya* and refers to lands which have been granted to a temple for its support, *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', pp. xxix-xxx.

[75] The term *vāriyam* is usually translated as committee; however, as Nilakanta Sastri has pointed out, it is more to be understood as an office for carrying out some important function of the Brahman settlement. As a committee formally constituted by the *sabha*, the *vāriyam* could be seen more as a formal than functional institution. In some cases this may have been true, but in others the *vāriyam*s did provide supervision to operations with which they were charged; *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 133, and *S.I.I.*, v. 14, no.78, p. 50, A.D. 860, for regulating irrigation channels, and *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no.5, pp. 8-9, A.D. 883, for removing silt from a tank.

annual or standing committe of the assembly (*samvatsara-vāriyam*).[76] The *brahmadeya* Tirupparkadaḷ contains a record from another Brahman village, Kaviri-Pakkam, alias Amaniarayana-chaturvedimangalam, which refers to the following offices of its *mahasabha*: *kalani-vāriyam* for the general supervision of cultivated lands, *ēri-vāriyam* for tank supervision; *kaliṅgu-vāriyam* for the supervision and maintenance of sluices, and *tadivali-vāriyam* for the supervision of paths and roads around cultivated fields. These offices are enumerated in an inscription of about A.D. 960 which records a grant by the *brahmadeya* Kaviri-Pakkan to a temple in the larger village of Tiruparkadal of some of its as that of Uttaramerur of about A.D. 924. In one, the *tōṭṭa- vāriyam*, cultivable waste land, *mañjikkam*, for reclamation in order to support a temple service.[77] That the *mahasabha* offices actually supervised appears clear from a few of the existing records such or garden officials, were authorized by the assembly to acquire sufficient land along an important irrigation channel in order to carry out dredging and repairs; the record states that lands were purchased and the work completed.[78] Where inscriptions speak of the displacement of the former cultivators, as some do, it may be presumed that supervision of cultivation was undertaken by Brahman members of the *sabha* and, under these circumstances, *kīlvāram*, as well as the *mēlvāram*, would have gone to the assembly.

Supervision of cultivation in most cases remained the prerogative of those who had held this right prior to the grant of the *brahmadeya*, and these peasants continued to retain a portion of the net proceeds of cultivation while passing to the *sabha* that portion called *mēlvāram*.[79] Continuity with the older pattern of agrarian relations was maintained by the persistence of the *ur* as a corporate

[76] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 174.

[77] *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no.156, pp. 32-3.

[78] *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.292, p. 147; also *see* Subrahmanya Aiyer's interesting reading of this inscription in which he takes the *paramēśvara-vadi* to be a road not a channel as it is usually taken in inscriptions (cf. *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3489; *vati*, as channel according to usage in *S.I.I.* (*Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 2, pp. 249-51).

[79] The term *mēlvāram* and *mīyātchi* both seem to refer to the income which was taken by those with the superior claim. The particle *mēl* means not only 'higher', 'upper', or 'major', but also 'superior' in the sense of priority of entitlement and 'first' in the sense of that which is taken first (*Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, pp. 3354 and 3356 and *S.I.T.I.*; 'Glossary', pp. xxvii and xxviii; also Gupta, op. cit., p. 192 and Minakshi, op. cit., p. 138).

entity within the Brahman village, even if its functions were reduced by those of the *sabha*. The relationship between the Brahman *sabha* and the peasant *ur* has properly been called 'hazy' by Nilakanta Sastri with reference to the best documented Brahman village which exists — Uttaramerur.[80] This relationship appears to be a one-sided one, favouring the Brahmans, which surely reflected the fact that, as Nilakanta Sastri has stated, all of the evidence of the relationship in Uttaramerur date from a time after the village had become a *chaturvēdimaṅgalam* and all of the transactions recorded were those of the *sabha*. Many of the rights which the *ur* or its executive, the *āḷuṅgaṇattār*, exercised from the time when there was no *sabha* came to be executed by the *sabha*. Yet, even in this great Brahman settlement, a *taṉiyūr* in its own small territory (*taṉ-kūṟu*), the non-Brahman essentially peasant, assembly continued to have an existence which can be glimpsed through the exclusively Brahman records of the place.

Nilakanta Sastri concludes his discussion of the *ur* and the *sabha* with the assertion that: 'the ancient *Ūr* by the side of the new *Sabhā* was secured as a part of the new order'.[81] That 'new order' centred upon the existence of Brahman settlements throughout the Coromandel plain, in every peasant locality, enjoying the support of the dominant peasantry with whom Brahmans had formed close relations during the Pallava period. Brahman settlements were linked to each other by common ritual ties and, judging from the territorialization of Brahman sub-castes, by kinship ties as well within the localities in which they were; they were also linked across *nadu* lines by similar bonds and through the central place functions which involved not only the multifarious activities of the sacredotal élite, but those of merchants and artisans as well. At this time when the fundamental organization of South Indian society was segmented into many isolated peasant localities, the central Brahman villages played a significant integrative role. Possessing a high degree of spatial mobility, Brahman families were able to move from peasant villages to Brahman villages and to temple centres; they were invited from places in one part of the plain to others hundreds of miles away for their particular ritual or sastric knowledge. In these centuries Brahmans contri-

[80] Nilakanta Sastri, *Cōḷa Studies*, p. 105.
[81] Ibid.

buted much to a macro regional culture which bridged the numerous social and cultural differences among territorially segmented peasant peoples.

The Brahman village functioned as a vital hinge in this macro regional culture. Standing between the great temple centres — populous towns of often great antiquity as Kanchi and Madurai — and the majority of Brahmans who lived in small, separate parts of prosperous peasant villages, Brahman villages of the Coromandel plain maintained institutions essential for the preservation and transmission of Indo-Aryan culture. In these settlements, with control over substantial agrarian resources — a token of the support of the peasantry among whom they lived — and with the patronage of locality chieftains and great overlords in Tanjavur, temples, schools, and *mathas* of various kinds elaborated and disseminated the ritual and philosophical doctrines of the age. Here too, the basic facilities for the pursuit of proper (*sātvik*) mode of brahmanical life was most readily realizable. Ritual and social purity according to agamic and sastric proscription could be maintained in the many peasant villages and the few towns in which Brahmans lived, of course; but in these places there was the proximity of many people of low ritual status and the lack of ritual specialists required for many life-cycle and other ceremonials. Brahman villages, to be sure, were also pluralistic settlements. In the original charter of Srivilliputtur, for example, six shares of the major portion of income from the village were allocated as *penisai vritti*, or shares for skilled artisans.[82] Vellalas are often referred to as residents of Brahman villages in Tondaimandalam and elsewhere.[83] Merchants too lived in the great Brahman villages and participated in the life of the place as distinctive, corporate elements.[84] The largest portion of the non-Brahman population in Brahman settlements as in others may well have been those who laboured in the fields of Brahmans and Vellalas as dependents of these two powerful groups. Such people would have lived in

[82] Viraraghavachari, 'Srivilliputtur Temple', p. 1.

[83] *A.R.E., 1909*, no.729, 11th C., Madhurantakam-chaturvedimangalam; *A.R.E., 1922*, no.20, 11th C., Arinjiyamangalam.

[84] *A.R.E., 1919*, no.399, early 11th C., refers to a merchant of Nellur (Nellore) as a resident of Muranottamangalam, *S.I.I.*, v. 14, nos.72, 46 of early 10th C. refer to a merchant and carpenter; also, K.V. Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, Amudha Nilayam Private Ltd., Madras, 1959, p. 174.

hamlets apart from the *cēri*s of the principal settlement — as they do today — but well within the precincts of the locality dominated by the Brahman assembly. Finally, in Brahman villages at the edges of the plain, or deep in the upland plateau, as in Karnataka, even tribal people frequented, if they did not at times dwell in, some Brahman villages.[85] Notwithstanding its pluralistic character, the Brahman village, better than other possible residential situations, afforded a unique context for the requirements of the pious and learned Brahmans of Coromandel, and to the extent that it is accurate to say that Brahmanical culture and life-styles were an important element in social models of the macro region, the Brahman village was a keystone of Coromandel culture because it was the Brahman place, *par excellence*.

Life-styles in Brahman villages of the Coromandel plain influenced the behaviour of those dominant peasants who sought to separate themselves from others in the countryside. Dietary rules, language, ritual activities, and the general modes of social interaction of the dominant peasants of the plain were modelled upon those of Brahmans among whom they lived. The extent to which this influence was effective in moulding a set of broad, subregional variants of respectable peasant culture becomes somewhat clearer after the twelfth century when dominant peasant groups began to establish their own ritual and educational centres. These followed those of the Brahmans but without the participation of the latter. Peasants also shifted their allegiance in ritual matters from the *sabha*s of the Brahmans to temples within and outside the Brahman villages.

[85] This somewhat late reference of the 14 C. or 15 C. is from an inscription from the *brahmadeya* of Bellur alias Vishnuvardhana-chaturvedimangalam in which a Karnataka tribal folk (Śabara) were mentioned as disciples of Brahman teachers (*Mysore Archaeological Report, 1913-14*, p. 6; cited in B.A. Saletore, *The Wild Tribes in Indian History*, Motilal Banarsidass, Lahore, 1935, pp. 58-9).

CHAPTER V

Right and Left Hand Castes
(*valaṅgai* and *iḍaṅgai*)

The *nadu*, the basic territorial unit in the South Indian macro region, gave to the agrarian system of the Chola period a highly fragmented character, elements of this remain to this day. Cultivated land and the nexus of relationships involving land exercised a strong centripetal influence upon the structure of social relationships in South India as in other pre-industrial agrarian contexts. Added to this, however, are the distinctively regional characteristics of spatially compressed marriage, kinship, and political relationships resulting in cores of peasant settlements which were discontinuous and relatively small. These settlement units remained small and isolated until the thirteenth century in most parts of the Coromandel plain and even longer in the western uplands, assuring to the *nadu*-locality its primacy as a structural unit.

Two factors tended to offset the isolation of the *nadu* without diminishing its integrity. One was the network of *brahmadeya*s from whence, during the tenth to the twelfth century, emanated a general, highly aryanized culture spreading from the Coromandel plain over the entire macro region. These were powerful, corporate institutions which exercised continuous influence for several centuries. The other was the emergence, by the eleventh century at least, of dual social divisions rooted in the numerous *nadu* societies but capable of transcending the isolation of these localities. These were potential social formations which could be activated for a variety of purposes, but which were not corporate or continuous in character. What the Brahman settlements of the region did to foster integrative cultural bonds among dominant peasant folk within the macro region, the divisions of the 'right-hand' and 'left-hand' peoples or castes appeared to do in forging significant social links among a variety of dependent peoples of diverse localities. In both cases, cultural and social integration beyond the

level of the *nadu* was the consequence although it was not until after the thirteenth century that the *nadu* began to lose some of its early primacy as the focus of society and culture in the macro region.

Labels for the dual social divisions have persisted for almost a millenium. *Valangai*, the Tamil word for 'right-hand' or 'right-side', as a social designation dates from the tenth century when contingencies of Rajaraja I's armies, *valaṅgai-vēḷaikkāra-padaigal*, are mentioned.[1] During the early eleventh century, persons calling themselves *valaṅgai*, made endowments to temples as in the case of the temple at Vembarrur, alias Sri-Cholamattanda-chatur-vedimangalam in Tanjavur.[2] References to groups of the 'left-hand' or 'left-side', *idangai*, appear somewhat later; one of the earliest recorded an affray between people of the right and left hand in A.D. 1072. This record reads in part:

> . . . in the second regnal year of the king (Kulōttunga I) there was a clash between the right-hand and left-hand communities in which the village was burnt down, the sacred places destroyed, and the images of deities and the treasure of the temple (Mummudi-Chōḷa-Vinnagar-Ālvar temple) looted.[3]

Thus, by the late eleventh century, there is evidence of two broad and at times hostile divisions of the population in at least some parts of the Coromandel plain; shortly it was to cover almost the whole of Tamil country. These divisions appear also to have existed in other parts of the macro region at about the same time though there is less convincing inscriptional evidence. In southern Karnataka, the equivalent Kannada terms for right and left-hand, *balagey* and *edagey*, were used as designations for the division.[4] Other designations later used among Kannada speakers were: *dēśa*, for right-hand people and *naḍu* for those of the left-hand division.[5] Among Telugu-speaking people of the macro

[1] V. Venkayya, *S.I.I.*, v. 2, 'Introduction', p. 10; C.S. Srinivasachari, 'The Origin of the Right and Left Hand Caste Divisions', *J.A.H.R.S.*, v. 4 (1929), p. 80.

[2] *I.M.P.*, v. 2, p. 1287, 341/1907, dated A.D. 1014.

[3] *A.R.E.*, 1936-7, para. 27; also summarized in Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 551.

[4] C. Hayavadana Rao (ed.), *Mysore Gazetteer*, v. 1, Government Press, Bangalore, 1927, p. 178; L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, v. 2, Mysore University, Mysore, 1935, p. 114; L. Rice, *Mysore*, v. 1, p. 222.

[5] Rice, *Mysore*, v. 1, p. 224. He reports that the term *pēte* was used in place of the term *nāḍu*.

region, slightly different designations were used. One, *kāṁpulu* (literally 'protector' but in common usage, 'agriculturist'), appears to have had the same meaning as the terms used in Tamil country and Karnataka for the right-hand designation while the terms *pañchāhaṇamvāru* and *pañchāṇulu* were the same as the left-hand division elsewhere.[6] The latter term in Telugu inscriptions refers to five artisan-trader groups usually consisting of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, braziers, and stone-and-wood sculptors, hence, *pañchā*, or five.[7] In later centuries especially, but apparently even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, another way of referring to the dual division among Telugu speakers was by their sectarian affiliations. Adherents to Vishnu worship, *śrīvaiṣnava*s, being the counterpart of the right division and Siva adherents allegedly corresponding to the left division.[8]

Analysis of the origins and functions of the dual divisions of peoples of the macro region have posed difficult problems. Though the subject of serious scholarly speculation for almost a century,[9] the origins of the divisions remain obscure. Classical poetry contains no references to the divisions, and the terms have little, if any, contemporary currency.[10] A note on origins is appended to this chapter. It has proven just as difficult to understand the functions of the right and left divisions, for the dual divisions resist analysis according to such Chola cultural categories as caste, sect, and territorial (*nadu*) affiliation.

[6] R. Narasimha Rao, *Corporate Life in Medieval Andhradēśa*, Secunderabad, 1967, pp. 110-23; S. Chandrasekhara Sastri, 'Economic Conditions Under the Hoysalas', *The Half-Yearly Mysore University Journal*, v. 2 (1928), pp. 215-16.

[7] Narasimha Rao, op.cit., pp. 56-63.

[8] N. Subha Reddi, 'Community Conflict among the Depressed Castes of Andhra', *Man in India*, v. 30, no.4 (Oct.-Dec. 1950), p. 4; Narasimha Rao notes the use of 'Srīvaiṣnulu' in groupings of what appears a right-hand character in medieval Telugu records (op.cit., p. 116). However, see *contra*, Sidney Nicholson, 'Social Organization of the Mālas — An Outcaste Indian People', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, v. 56, (Jan.-June, 1926), p. 91: 'most Right-hand castes are Saivite in faith . . .' This discrepancy cannot be explained by regional variation since the references appear to be to the Rayalaseema portion of south-western Andhra.

[9] Cf. the work of Oppert which was published in 1893; notice two somewhat earlier, brief, and less analytic discussions in the *Indian Antiquary*: J.S.F. Mackenzie, 'Caste Insignia', v. 4, (Nov., 1876), pp. 344-6 and James F. Kearns, 'The Right-Hand and Left-Hand Castes', v. 5 (Dec., 1876), pp. 353-4.

[10] Though she reports that the dual divisions are not known to more than a few

While each of these categories may be found at times to have been related to the dual divisions, the divisions are essentially different. Thus, ranking seems present at times, as in an A.D. 1227 inscription in which newly admitted groups to the division in a part of modern South Arcot are declared 'the eyes and the hands of the *iḍaṅgai*', body images suggesting the performance of service for other members of the division.[11] Generally, however, the divisions give the appearance of being non-ranked groupings of local social groups. Also, while certain elements of sect organization may be seen at times in the references to an *idangai* perceptor or a *maṇḍapam*, the divisions are not essentially religious groupings. Finally, while the divisions have territorial focus—there being no macro region-wide divisions as such — that territory appears always to have been greater than the *nadu*.

The categories of caste, sect, and territory fail to help in an understanding of the dual divisions in South India because the divisions are different from each and all, and because, at least in the early period under consideration, the scope of these three social categories was very highly localized whereas the dual divisions appear to be essentially supra-local in character. It is therefore little wonder that where the divisions have been considered as something to explain by historians, these divisions are often treated together with other, so-called, 'corporate' institutions in a modest genre of historical literature dealing with what is called, 'corporate

But, two persistent features of the early right-left divisions militate against their dismissal as 'corporate groups' in presumed ensemble with other like groups of a caste, sectarian, or territorial in kind. One is the importance of references to the assimilation of previously outside people to the left division and their alliance with other generally similar groups; the other is the military and life' or 'local government'.[12]

of her informants, Brenda E.F. Beck made the conception a central organizing principle of her recent, *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1972. Commenting on her usage, Dumont in *Homo Hierarchicus*, p. 288, called it '*sui generis*'.

[11] *A.R.E.*, 1940-1, no.184; discussed below more fully.

[12] The best known of these for early India generally are: R.C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1918 and R.K. Mookerji, *Local Government in Ancient India*, Oxford, 1919; for South India: R. Narasimha Rao, *Corporate Life in Medieval Āndhradēśa*, Secunderabad, 1967 and F.S. Dikshit, *Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka*, Dharwar, 1964.

colonization ventures with which both divisions of the Chola period were associated. Together, these two features of assimilation/alliance and military/colonization convey the sense of a social order which is not fixed in terms of its structural constituents nor in space, but a social order which is in flux, one expanding from its relatively isolated local forms of organization to ever wider forms of societal and cultural integration. The corporate imagery of the existing historiography with its presumption of fixedness and stability around bureaucratic kingship, caste, and guild or its conception of conflict resolution through factious groupings fails to appreciate the dynamism of Chola society.

Viewed as a 'corporate institution', the dual division is looked upon as guild-like, or as a *śreṇī*, i.e. a multicaste body of traders, artisans, and agriculturists. This guild conception is based upon the well-recognized association of the right division with agriculture and related activities, including trade and some processing of agricultural commodities, as well as the equally consistent association of left division groups with artisan-trader activities. The guild or *śreṇī* notion also fits well with the general Indian institution usually called 'the *jajmānī* system'[13] — localized exchanges of goods and services centred on the ritual and economic dominance of agricultural patrons (*jajmān*, Sanskrit: *yajamāna*) and their clients. However, any essentially cooperative and interdependent model, whether guild/*śreṇī* or *jajmānī*, fails to deal with the often conflictful relations between the divisions which are attested in historical records from at least the eleventh century, as noted above. Thus, some scholars, cued by conflict between the right and left divisions, have applied the term 'faction' following the usage of some British administrators.[14]

'Faction' denotes an alignment of persons for the purpose of attaining some objective in competition with others.[15] Conflict

[13] See the excellent summary discussion by Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, pp. 97-108.

[14] McKim Marriott, *Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan*, Deccan College Monograph Series, no.23, Deccan College, Poona, 1960, pp. 46-51, where he speaks of 'factional lines of ritual patronage and alliance'. J.H. Hutton speaks of 'factious rivalry', *Caste in India*, Oxford, 1963, p. 67. The term is also used in the following of the *Madras Gazetteers: Salem*, F.J. Richards, pp. 125-6; *Trichinopoly*, F.R. Hemingway, pp. 92-3.

[15] *See* Alan R. Beals and Bernard J. Siegel, *Divisiveness and Social Conflict:*

is the business of factions, and the term fits, most aptly, certain of the activities with which the right and left divisions in South India have been associated during recent centuries certainly, and possibly from a much earlier time.

As sociological elements, factions have been viewed in many ways by modern scholars, though all might agree with the humorous observation of Nicholas that 'the faction is a troublesome form of social organization'.[16] Factional alignments can and have been relatively persistent in some societies, particularly at times of special internal strain and external stress.[17] And, however unstable they may be, factional systems can achieve some important objectives through means not usually considered appropriate and often in contravention to norms regarding conflict resolution. This would seem especially true in cultures which emphasize 'harmony and unanimity' or where 'cooperation' among social groups is given high value as it is in caste culture according to many scholars.[18] Finally, even if factions may be evanescent, 'their component cliques and families may be stable groups'.[19] Accordingly, the dual division of social groups in the South Indian macro region may plausibly be seen to lend itself to analysis as factional systems even as it is recognized that there were important changes in the composition, purposes, and context in which the divisions operated in the course of perhaps eight centuries.

Neither 'faction' nor 'guild' appear fully satisfactory terms for discussion of the early phase of the dual division of social groups in South India. If one were to adopt Nicholas' definition of faction — 'a noncorporate political conflict group, the members of which are recruited by a leader on the basis of diverse ties'[20] — it would

An Anthropological Approach, O.U.P., Bombay, 1967, pp. 21ff; Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956; Raymond Firth, 'Factions in Indian and Overseas Societies; Introduction', *British Journal of Sociology*, 8, no.4 (Dec., 1957), p. 292.

16 Ralph W. Nicholas, 'Factions: A Comparative Analysis', *in* M. Banton (ed.), *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, London, 1969, p. 21.

17 These positions are examined in Beals and Siegel, op.cit., p.166.

18 Ibid., p. 158.

19 Ibid., p. 166.

20 Ralph Nicholas, 'Structures of Politics in the Villages of Southern Asia', *in Structure and Change in Indian Society*, eds. Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn, Aldine Publishing, Co., Chicago, 1968, p. 278. Note the difference here from Appadurai who appears to reserve the term 'faction' for manifestations of right-

be necessary to reject the term during the Chola period or at any time prior to the seventeenth century. The dual social divisions in South India were not solely nor primarily conflict groups at this earlier time, and, while ties among each of the divisions may have been varied, the core of the interests defining each are persistent and clear. Moreover, to the extent that factions may be viewed as 'ego-centred', essentially individual-participant 'quasi-groups', as Mayer has called them, the South Indian dual divisions would not qualify. The constituent units of the divisions are always localized caste groups.[21]

As neither the concept of 'faction' nor 'guild' which have been used to describe the right and left divisions appear to fit certain of the important characteristics of the divisions, some other way of speaking about them is necessary. The recent essay about the right and left division by Arjun Appadurai postulates a cultural model to deal with the conflict of right and left castes, especially in Madras city during the seventeenth century where he also uses the concept of faction. However, for the Chola period, the stress upon conflict is misconceived. Conflict appears a minor aspect of the divisions during this early period however important it becomes later. To emphasize conflict between the divisions at this early period is to impose later characteristics upon the divisions of the Chola period and thus to distort an understanding of the institution in Chola times.

Most Chola inscriptions pertaining to the *valangai* and *idangai* do not refer to conflict, but to the typical subject matter of inscriptions: gifts to Brahmans and temples. From these references, we learn of various kinds of groups cooperating beyond their local bases. Among the most prominent were the *valaṅgai-māsēnai*[22] and *iḍaṅgai-māsēnai*:[23] the great armies of the right-hand and left-hand. Trade activities and especially relations with important

left conflict in Madras city (Arjun Appadurai, 'Right and Left-Hand Castes in South India', *I.E.S.H.R.*, v. 11 [June-Sept. 1974]).

[21] Adrian Mayer, 'Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies', *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, ed. M. Banton, Association of Social Anthropologists Monograph, Edinburgh, 1966, p.116.

[22] *A.R.E.* 1933, no.232 and 233 discussed by K.S. Vaidyanathan, 'The Members of the South India Army (*sēṉai*): Their Assembly and Its Functions', *QJMS.* XXXII (1941-2), pp. 301-3.

[23] *A.R.E.* 1961-2, no. 478 in the script of the eleventh century, from Channapatna taluk, Bangalore district.

itinerant trade organizations were other reasons for extra-local cooperation among locality peoples. Thus there are the numerous inscriptions referring to *nānadēśi* merchants meeting together with local merchants of the *nadu* and *nagara*, that is merchants of ordinary agricultural villages of a locality as well as special trade settlements, including *valangai* weavers.[24] And, finally, there are rare Chola records of agreements by lower caste people of the *valangai* and *idangai* divisions, in some places at least, for resistance against 'the Brāhmaṇas Veḷḷālaṇs who hold the proprietory rights (*kāni*) over the lands of the district'.[25]

The divisions are thus seen not as 'absolute' social entities, for example, as 'super castes' as suggested by the terms 'right-hand castes' and 'left-hand castes', but as 'relative' or 'potential' groupings of established local groups. Such aggregate groupings were capable of dealing with extra local problems beyond the scope and capability of existing locality institutions of the time and capable of being called into existence in response to a variety of problems, including conflicts, requiring extra-local cooperation.[26] At any time and place, the composition of right and left divisions would vary according to the exigent condition which brought them into being, and they would lapse into latency with the passing of that condition.

Viewed as relative or potential groupings rather than as enduring corporate ones (e.g. guilds) or as *ad hoc* conflict groupings (i.e. factions), the dual divisions of Chola times assume an anachronistically modern appearance. That is, the *valangai* and *idangai* divisions of the Chola period appear as broad ethnic coalitions which are neither internally ranked in the manner of castes into subordinate sub-castes nor externally ranked with respect to the other bloc or division. Rather, in the manner of horizontally integrated South Indian caste associations of the recent past — the Nadars and Vanniyakula Kshatriyas[27] — an absolute quality is claimed on the basis of birth into a named group and the ascriptive right

[24] *A.R.E.* 1912, no.342 and para. 25/1913.

[25] *A.R.E.* 1913, no. 34 at Aduturai, Tiruchchirapalli, probably in the time of Kulottunga III (A.D. 1178-1218).

[26] As noted by Marshall Sahlins, 'The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion', in *Comparative Political Systems*, ed. Ronald Cohen and John Middleton, New York, 1967, pp. 105-6.

[27] Summarized by Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967, pp. 36-64.

to certain emblems and insignia. Hierarchical bases of status or moral condition are ignored. The whole or part of such large groupings are capable of acting together for certain purposes, but they do not lose their localized bases of organization and, typically, intermarriage among the constituent groups does not occur.

The need for such supra-local coalitions was particularly great until well into the thirteenth century by which time urbanization provided a reliable supra-local focus at least for leading artisan-trader groups, usually designated 'left-hand' people. By the same time, the widespread merging of *nadu*-localities into the *periyanadu*, or great *nadu*, provided for collaboration among leading agrarian peoples — those of the right-hand — on a supra-local level. Prior to the thirteenth century, however, the dual divisions, with their varied constituencies from place to place, represented perhaps the sole means by which groups other than Brahmans and some military chiefs could on occasion transcend the borders of the *nadu*-locality.

One of the major reasons for seeing the dual divisions as 'relative' or 'potential' structural entities, rather than ones which had an absolute (i.e. 'corporate') existence in particular places is that neither division finds mention among those groups named in the detailed Chola inscriptions dealing with matters requiring the assent of or the cooperation from important local groups. In *brahmadeya* inscriptions, these local bodies inevitably include the following: the *nattar*; assemblies of neighbouring *brahmadeya*s represented by their spokesmen (or headmen), the *brahmadēya-kiḻavar*; assemblies of villages (*ur*), part of whose income was previously granted to support Hindu temples (*dēvadāna*), Buddhist and Jaina shrines (*paḷḷiccanda*); assemblies of villages which were trade centres and under merchants' control, *nagarattār* or *naga-ragaḷitār*; and assemblies of villages (*ur*), some portion of whose income was diverted to other forms of special purposes (*kaṇimur-ūṭṭu* and *vettipeṛu*).[28] Other Chola inscriptions refer to other bodies, including *kiḻ kalanaigaḷ*, who are described as including carpenters (*taccan*), blacksmiths (kollar), goldsmiths (*taṭṭar*), and *koliyar* (weavers?[29]).[30] Seen in these references are the various

[28] These terms are taken from 'The Larger Leiden Plates of Rajaraja I,' *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 258.

[29] *kaulika* appears to be the Sanskrit word upon which the Tamil term *kōliyar*

caste groups comprising the agrarian-centred division of the *valangai* in Tamil country and the mobile artisans of the *idangai*, but there is no mention of these divisions themselves.

Hence, rather than use terms such as 'faction' or 'guild' to speak of the dual division, the term 'division' will be used. The meaning attached to the term 'division' is that of the occasional combination of agrarian-centred groups, on the one hand, and artisan-traders on the other at levels beyond the localities in which both kinds of groups lived.

One of the most important functions of the *idangai* division was the assimilation of groups to the expanding order of the Chola period. From the tenth to the thirteenth century new tracts of land not previously committed to sedentary agriculture were being brought into the expanding ambience of the Chola agrarian order. Whether by conquest or by the peaceful extension of the Chola agrarian system, people of these new tracts were brought into the dual divisions, and the groups thus included in the dual divisions might be agriculturists who had previously practiced shifting cultivation or they might be artisans or they might be any one of the various kinds of occupational groups which were not already aligned with one or the other dual divisions. In either case, the newly recruited groups could henceforth make alliance claims upon others in their division and even cause the division in any place to change from potential to actual groupings for a variety of purposes.

This process of assimilation is well exemplified in two early thirteenth century *idangai* inscriptions. The first, from the Uttamacholan temple of Urrattur, fifteen miles north of the Kaveri River (Lalgudi taluk, Tiruchirapalli), is dated A.D. 1218 and reads in part:

> In order to kill the demons (that disturbed) the sacrifices of Kasyapa [the priest of Visvakarma, patron god of artisans] we were made to appear from the *agni-kuṇḍa* (sacrificial fire pit) and while we were thus protecting the said sacrifice, Chakravartin Arindama honoured the officiating sage priests by carrying them in a car and led them to the Brāhmaṇa colony (newly founded by himself). On this occasion we were made to take our seats on the back of the car and to carry the slippers and umbrellas of

is based (Sircar, *Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 159 and Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit Dictionary*, p. 317, where another meaning is 'left-hand' *śākta* worshippers).

[30] *A.R.E.* 1888, no.118; a Chidambram inscription of *c.* A.D. 1036. (Rajendra I, 24th year); *see* Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 1, p. 562.

these sages. Eventually with these Brāhmaṇa sages we were made to settle down in the [same] villages. . . . We received the clan name *iḍaṅgai* because the sages (while they got down from their cars) were supported by us on their left side. The ancestors of this our sect having lost their credentials and insignia in the jungles and bushes, we were ignorant of our origins. Having now once learnt it, we the members of the 98 subsects enter into a compact, in the fortieth year of the king [Kulottunga III] that we shall hereafter behave like the sons of the same parents and what good and evil may befall any one of us, will be shared by all. If anything derogatory happens to the *iḍaṇgai* class, we shall jointly assert our rights until we establish them. It is also understood that only those who, during their congregational meetings to settle communal disputes, display the insignia horn, bugle, and parasol shall belong to our class. Those who have to recognize us now and hereafter, in public, must do so from our distinguishing symbols — the feather of the crane and the loose hanging hair. The horn and the conch shell shall also be sounded in front of us and the bugle blown according to the fashion obtaining among the *iḍaṇgai* people. Those who act in contravention to these rules shall be treated as the enemies of our class. Those who behave differently from the rules (thus) prescribed for the conduct of the *iḍaṇgai* classes shall be excommunicated and shall not be recognized as *śrutimān* (members of the community). They will be considered slaves of the classes opposed to us.[31]

The second record is from Varanjuram (Vriddhachalam taluk, South Arcot) and is dated A.D. 1227. It reads:

> We, the *nāḍus* [assemblies of eleven localities] having assembled at the village of Tiruvalanjuram . . . got the following resolution engraved on the Tiruvalanjuram-uḍaiyār temple: 'the malaiyamākkaḷ and the natta-mākkaḷ of these *nāḍus* shall henceforth be admitted into the *idaṅgai-taḷam* [left hand class of men]; they shall be considered the eyes and hands of the *idaṅgai*; if we violate this resolution, we shall be considered as wrong-doers to the caste. [32]

The resolution was endorsed by Brahmans, and other leaders of the locality as well as by those calling themselves of the *iḍaṅgai-*

[31] *A.R.E.* 1913, para. 39; summarized by Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 551-2. Also note the interesting comment on this record by D.C. Sircar, *The Guhilas of Kiṣkindhā*, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, pp. 22-3.

[32] The *nadu*s mentioned are: *irungēḷappāḍi*, *kunnra-kūrram*, *tuṇḍa-nāḍu*, *tirumu-naippāḍi*, *ceṅgunra-nāḍu*, *Vanakappādi aḍaiy-nāḍu*, *paṅgaḷa-nāḍu mēlkarai-nāḍu*, *gaṅgappāḍi* and *paranurrū-nāḍu*. Nilakanta Sastri also refers to this record — 184th/1940-1 — which he locates in the Kallakkurichchi taluk of South Arcot (*The Cōḷas*, p. 552); the text cited above was from a translation by Y. Subbarayalu, research scholar, Department of Archaeology, University of Madras.

taḷam including *kaikkoḷar*s and *sāliyar* (weavers), *vāṇigar*s (merchants) and others.[33]

These *idangai* records of the thirteenth century presume the existence of an established supra-local social entity into which new groups could be initiated. In the first inscription it is not clear who those of the lost credentials and insignia were, though the 'ignorance' about origins and the references to the jungle suggest persons who, in other circumstances, would be low in ritual status. Those mentioned in the second inscription are more readily identifiable and interesting cases to which reference shall be made shortly.

A point which must be taken up first pertains to the apparent lack of emphasis upon stratified relations within either the *idangai* or the *valangai* division. It is as if the divisions were homogeneous, pluralistic aggregates in which all constituent groups shared a common status and common symbols of rank. There are two ways in which this apparent homogeneity among the constituent units of the divisions is expressed. One way is in shared natural substance, that is in attributes ascribed to the divisions as living things which possess unique endowed qualities arising from how they came into existence. Thus, according to a later source, the *Idangai-valangai Puranam* of A.D. 1692-3,[34] both divisions were created or brought into being by the actions of gods. In one context, Siva and Indra are made responsible for the left-hand division and Brahma and a *rishi* (*bhṛigu*, Tamil: *pirukā*) for the right-hand division; in another context, the divisions are seen as the result of a disagreement between Siva, as Paramesvara, and his consort Parvati. More specifically, the *Idangai-valangai Puranam* assigns to each division different somatic markers. To the left division, the most important are blood, skin, and eye-balls; to the right division, bones, nerves, and brain. The other symbolic way in which the constituent units of the divisions appear to have been accorded equal status and thus to constitute a pluralistic aggregate of equivalent units, was in the common emblems each division possessed even though each constituent unit had its own emblems. In the Urratur inscription above, several insignia were given prominence. According to the *Idangai-valangai Jatiyar Varalaru* of the Mackenzie

[33] In place of the word, *iḍaṅgai-taḷam*, Nilakanta Sastri has the word, *iḍaṅgait-tanattom* or 'other *Iḍangai* people of the area' (*The Cōḷas*, p.552).

[34] Dated in 1615 of the *śaka* era or 4794 of the *kalīyuga*; Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, Mss. no. D. 2793.

collection, the ninety-eight castes of the right division had common emblems of the 'Brahmani' kite (Garuda?), the half-human, half-animal form ('*purusha-mirukam*'), the elephant, ass, and eagle, while the left division had the tiger, fox, the male bird (*pōtu*), sword, crow, 'Brahmani' kite, horse, lion, and a mythological animal with a face bearing features of the lion and elephant (*yāḷi*).[35]

Such shared insignia and symbols of common 'natural' attributes among units of the divisions may appear to imply 'corporateness' in the sense that castes are corporate. That is, the dual divisions may be supposed to have been something like 'super-castes' with the same quality of durable and diffused solidarity which characterized a caste. However, this would be incorrect. Rather, the divisions were groupings with quite specific elements of solidarity, such as possessed by sectarian groups. The religious sect, with certain exceptions like the Lingayats, was comprised of persons of many castes (though excluding the very lowest castes), but stratified interactions were irrelevant when sect votaries acted in religious contexts. Thus, in the confines of the sect centre, all sect members, regardless of their caste affiliations, interacted as equals in ritual activities.

Differences between the dual divisions and sects are important, however. The religious sect was an absolute, not relative social form. Its enduring character was *saṁpradāya*, a tradition passed from sectarian leader, *ācharyā* to disciples; its institutional base was the *matha* or sect centre. In relation to the *saṁpradāya* and the *matha* all laic members suspended their caste identities though such identities obviously continued. Similarly, the dual divisions were composed of localized caste/occupational groups who interacted according to caste norms in their own localities. These norms could be altered to enable joint action with others in a broad, essentially occupational, alignment on a variety of matters. Co-operation in military ventures and in support of religious institutions is how the divisions are usually seen. These other activities must be seen as ancillary to the maintenance of occupational

35 *Iḍaṅgai-valaṅgai Jaṭiyar Varalāru* [History of the Left Hand and Right Hand Castes], the Mackenzie Mss., Oriental Mss. Library, University of Madras, no.R. 1572. This is undated; it may be of the eighteenth century. In the enumeration of insignia for the divisions provided to the Chingleput magistrate Coleman in 1809, some twenty were described as appropriate for all or any right division caste and slightly fewer for castes of the left division (J.S.F. Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 345).

interests at the supralocal level and, of course, at the local level where it most counted. In disregarding caste distinctions among their constituent units, the dual divisions were not denying caste in the sense that sects did in obedience to *bhakti* principles. Religious bodies of the medieval period often affirmed the supernatural order prevailing at the sect temple centre by suspending the 'natural' order of caste relationships. For the right and left divisions it is rather that caste, whether viewed as localized ethnic groups or as ritually ranked parts of a moral order, was not salient for the supra-local, occupational functions of the divisions, at least at this early time. Thus, caste groups are mentioned, but appear to have little to do with the way in which the divisions were transformed from latency to deal with the issues they did.

The endorsement of Brahmans and other prestigious members of local society in the Varanjuram record cited above does not clarify the matter of internal stratification of the divisions. Along with Brahmans, referred to in that inscription as *andaṇar*, there were *ēkayar*, i.e. ascetics, and *niyāyattārs*, i.e. local persons of prominence.[36] Weavers and merchants who endorsed the resolution have the appearance of being persons of wealth, but there is no definite attribution of their superior status in the record. Since Brahmans are outside the divisions in most accounts, the association of Brahmans in both the inscriptions tends to confirm the equality of status that existed among the constituent castes of the divisions. It is as attendants of 'Brāhmaṇa sages' or through the endorsing function of Brahmans that the claim of respectability and membership in one of the divisions is made and justified.[37]

The absence of references to stratified divisions within the dual divisions does not eliminate the possibility of internal strata. For some scholars such strata appear at times to exist. References to groups like the *kaikkōḷar* and other weavers and merchants, who are mentioned along with Brahmans in the endorsement, suggest this to C.S. Srinivasachari. In his pioneering work on the dual divisions he states that there were indeed strata and that the divisions reveal a process of 'low castes striving for higher social

[36] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xliv.

[37] Attention is again drawn to Appadurai's recent discussion, especially his iteration and analysis of various accounts of the origins of the divisions (op. cit., p. 233 ff).

positions'.[38] Further support for this view is provided by the *nattamākkaḷ* folk discussed in the Varanjuram inscription.

Thirty years after the date of the Varanjuram inscription cited above, the *nattamākkaḷ* claimed for themselves the status of *pūmiputtirar*, 'sons of the soil', in two inscriptions from Vengur and Tirukkoyilur, near the site of the Varanjuram record.[39] The title *pūmiputtirar* is significant since it is claimed by Vellalas, the dominant peasants of the right division, the *valangai*. For the *nattamākkaḷ*, their membership in the left division but lately attained (i.e. A.D. 1227) this was an ambitious claim indeed! But such claims become more common later.[40] That the *nattamākkaḷ* of modern South Arcot made this claim is supported by usage in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka, where *nattamākkaḷ* are called 'kings of Vellalas (*orusār vēlāla*)' indicating that those migrating from what is now South Arcot to Sri Lanka during the medieval period may have carried this relatively exalted designation.[41] However, during the nineteenth century, the *nattamākkaḷ* as well as the *malaiyamākkaḷ* mentioned in the A.D. 1227 inscription were still closely linked territorially and in marriage.[42] This suggests that while the plainsmen (*nattamān*) of this part of South Arcot might have sought to differentiate themselves from the hill folk (*malaimān*) by arrogating to themselves titles such as *pūmiputtirar*, and by association.

[38] Srinivasachari, op. cit., p. 84.

[39] Vengur inscription is 206/1936-7, commented upon in para. 43 of *A.R.E.* 1936-7; the Tirukkoyilur record is 117/1900 and is discussed in the same place as well as *I.M.P.*, v. 1, no.845, p. 226.

[40] Buchanan cites evidence of this in recording the disputes between the right-hand groups of Komati and Pancham Banijiga merchants, the former claiming leadership of the division on the basis of being Vaisyas whereas the Banijiga were but Sudras (op. cit., v. 1, p. 80).

[41] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 4, p. 2149, '*nattamākkaḷ*'. The association of these people with Sri Lanka is further supported by an inscription of A.D. 1518 and one of A.D. 1425 in which Vanniyar warriors are referred to as conquerors of Sri Lanka (*in* T.N. Subramaniam, 'Fresh Light from a Tiruvottiyur Inscription', *Seminar on Inscriptions* [*Kal-veṭṭu Karuttaraṅgu*], ed. R. Nagaswamy, Books India Private Ltd., Madras, 1968, p. 197). Further confirmation of the connection of Vanniyars with Sri Lanka comes in a *purāṇa* allegedly composed in A.D. 1615 in which a warrior, Devakirtti, 'emperor in all countries where Vanniyars lived, seized Lanka and Vengi' *idaṅgai-valaṅgai puranam* [Ancient Story of Left and Right Castes] (Oriental Mss. Library, Madras, doc. no. D. 2793). *Nattamākkaḷ* are associated with the caste of Vanniyar through their connection with *paḷḷi*s.

[42] Thurston, op. cit., v. 7, p. 206.

Vellala-like status, this claim did not hold. The *nattamākkaḷ* remained a peasant people below the status of the Vellala and were often identified as part of the Palli caste, a peasant group incongruously of the left division.[43] Hence, if status differences were at times stressed, these were not always successful.

Military actions by the dual divisions occupy a conspicuous place in the early records of the divisions and pose most sharply the question of the potential or relative character of the divisions. There are references to the 'great army' (*māsēṉai*) of *valangai* and *idangai*, and to fighting men called *vēḷaikkāra* which comprised part of the Chola army in Sri Lanka during the late eleventh century according to a Tamil inscription at Polonnaruva.[44] Also, inscriptions of the middle of the eleventh century from Tiruvenkadu in Tanjavur and Tiruvallam in North Arcot refer to grants by members of both divisions to temples, notwithstanding the fact that in other places, notably Kanchi, though perhaps not at this early time, the two divisions used different temples, halls, and dancing girls.[45]

The term *valangai* is first encountered in connection with military contingents under the first of the great Cholas, Rajaraja I. Analysis of Chola military organization, granted the meagreness of the evidence, leads to the conclusion that the designation *vaḷaṅgai* could only have referred to armed contingents raised and commanded by the dominant peasantry of the Chola heartland of Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam. During the time of Rajaraja I (985-1014) and Rajendra I (1014-44), inscriptions from Tanjavur enumerate regiments of the army of which almost one-half (thirteen of thirty-one) were entitled *valangai*.[46] Other forces

[43] Ibid., 212. However, the Mackenzie Collection 'History of Left Hand and Right Hand Castes' (fn. 34), refers to *nattamākkaḷ* and *malaymākkaḷ* as right-hand groups.

[44] K.S. Vaidyanathan, 'The Members of the Ancient South Indian Army (Sēnai): Their Assembly and its Function', *QJMS* XXXII (1941-2), pp. 301-3; *E.I.*, v. 18, no.38, 'Polonnaruva Inscription of Vijayabahu I', pp. 330-8; *A.R.E.* 1961-2, no.478, 11th C.

[45] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, 63. Oppert (op. cit.) refers to the special place of Kanchi (p. 62) and also mentions that *valangai* and *idangai* worshippers at the Selvapillai Temple of Melkote were given different hours for worship; also mentioned in *A.R.E.*, 1921, para. 47.

[46] The following are the terms mentioned in the Tanjavur inscriptions related to military units of Rajaraja I; each is followed by the words, *terinda-vaḷaṅgai-*

included household troops and troops drawn from territories on the margins of Chola country, '*vaḍugan*' from the northern, Telugu, tracts and *malaiyālar* from the hill borders of modern Kerala in the west.[47] These forces serving the Cholas bore the designation *vēḷaikkārar*, and the *valangai* were further identified by the addition to their titles of one of the many pseudonymns taken by Rajaraja and a connective word, *terinda*, or 'selected'.[48] Thus, there was the unit called: *nittavinoda-terinda-vaḷaṅgai-vēḷaikkarappaḍaigal*, 'Nittavinoda's [Rajaraja's] select right-hand warrior regiment'.[49]

The meaning of *vēḷaikkārar* has vexed historians for half a century, and it is still not clear. That it refers to warriors is unambiguous from the contexts in which it appears in inscriptions and literary sources of the tenth to the twelfth centuries. But 'whose' soldiers they were is still at issue. The central problem involving this term is whether the *vēḷaikkārar* were special and permanent troops of the Chola overlords or whether they were enlisted for extraordinary or occasional military service as is suggested by the *vēḷai*, one of the meanings of which is 'occasional'.[50] If they were the permanent troops of the Chola overlords, the *valangai* units cannot simultaneously be considered local peasant militia units. Alternatively, if the *valaṅgai vēḷaikkārar* were recruited to the military adventures of the Cholas from existing military units among the peasantry — controlled and led by the peasantry — then the association of the *valaṅgai* with the peasantry would appear as strong in the early period as it is in the lists of the eighteenth century.

The prevailing view of the *vēḷaikkārar* is stated most clearly by Nilakanta Sastri. He says that they 'were the most permanent and dependable troops in the royal service . . . they were ever ready to defend the king and his cause with their lives when occasion (*vēḷai*) arose'.[51] This view is supported by the editor of the *Tamil*

vēḷaikkārar except the first two in which the terms *vaḷaṅgai-vēḷaikkārappaḍigal* only appear. These are: *perundanattu-*, *śirudanattu-*; and *aragiya-sora-*, *chanda-parakrama-*, *ilaiyarāja-*, *kshatriyaśikhamaṇi-*, *muratavikramābharaṇa-*, *rājarāja-*, *nittavinōda-*, *rājakaṇṭhīrava-*, *rājavinōda-*, *raṇamukha-bhima-*, *vikramābharaṇa-*. V. Venkayya, *S.I.I.*, v. 2, 'Introduction', p. 10.

47 *E.I.*, v. 18, no.38, lines 39-44, p. 338.

48 Noted by Venkayya, *S.I.I.*, v. 2, 'Introduction', pp. 10-11; *see* also *Tamil Lexicon*, iv, p. 2034, '*teri*'.

49 Venkayya, *S.I.I.*, v. 2, 'Introduction', pp. 10-11.

50 *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3844.

51 *The Cōḷas*, p. 454; *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3844, v. 2, p. 895.

Lexicon who writes, under the entry, *vēḷaikkārar*: 'devoted servants who held themselves responsible for a particular service to their king at stated hours and vow to stab themselves to death if they fail in that'.[52] As evidence for this view, Nilakanta Sastri refers, with uncharacteristic vagueness, to later literary sources while the *Lexicon* cites the commentary of Periyavachchapillai on Nammalvar's *Tirumoli*, to the effect that these soldiers committed suicide for their king.[53]

This view of the devotion of the *vēḷaikkārar* to their king, whom they served presumably on a permanent basis, replaced an older, less heroic, view held by the epigraphists Hultzsch, Venkayya, and Krishna Sastri. They spoke of 'troops of servants', 'volunteers', or simply, soldiers of lower status ('working classes') who fought in Chola armies.[54] Other scholars have suggested that the *vēḷaikkārar* were mercenary troops as were others in the Chola forces.[55] It may also be noted that the word *vēḷaikkārar* differs from the word *vēlaikkārar*, servant or workman, only in the retroflex 'l'.

At issue here is whether these warriors, representing half of the known regiments enumerated in inscriptions of the great Cholas, could be considered a permanent force, supported from the resources of the Chola overlords or whether the *valaṅgai vēḷaikkārar* were mobilized from among existing peasant military units for some limited purpose, and were thus an extension of the *valangai* (or *idangai*) as a potential social formation. The former view is congenial to that of Nilakanta Sastri and others who have tended to place heavy reliance upon the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the Chola state. However, there is no evidence of the basic means of supporting a large army any more than there is for maintenance of an elaborate bureaucracy. Neither, of course, was necessary. Just as locality institutions provided most of the ad-

[52] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3844.

[53] Cited in *E.I.*, v. 18, no.38, p. 334. For a more complete version of this argument *see:* K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'A Note on Vēḷaikkārar', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (*Ceylon*), v. 4, (N.S., 1954), pp. 67-71.

[54] *E.I.*, v. 18, p. 334.

[55] K.K. Pillay, *South India and Ceylon*, University of Madras, 1963, p. 80, fn., in which he speaks of mercenary soldiers; however, on p. 144, Pillay says they were a permanent element of the Chola armies. The view that *vēḷaikkārar* were mercenaries finds recent support in a doctoral thesis by Kenneth R. Hall, 'The *Nagaram* as a Marketing Center in Early Medieval South India', unpublished, Dept. of History, University of Michigan, 1975, pp. 191-2.

ministrative functions required at the time, so, too, it must be supposed that the major forces involved in the wars of the Cholas were supplied from the existing organizations of the locality-based society of the time. To the core of household troops maintained by the Cholas, who may indeed have held a special loyalty to their overlord, and some mercenary troops from the western and northern forests, those under the control of peasant locality leaders alone, during the tenth and eleventh centuries at least, could have provided the military units under Chola command. By the twelfth century, *idangai* forces were added to this pool of militarily organized folk within the macro region who could be mobilized to join the Chola kings in defensive and predatory campaigns.

The association of the Coromandel peasantry with *valangai* military forces is supported by an important record of the time of Kulōttunga I, A.D. 1072, at Āvani (Mulbagal taluk, Kolar district) in Gangavadi. As discussed above,[56] the claim of the dominant locality folk in this area to membership in '48,000 bhūmi' of Tondaimandalam makes their identity as Vellalas from that adjoining territory a relatively firm one. The central purpose of the record bears out the unmistakable peasant interests of these locally dominant folk. Furthermore, this inscription is somewhat unusual in being one of that small class of stone inscriptions which do not relate to a temple endowment.

This Kolar inscription records how various local agrarian groups were to be taxed in a locality, called the 'eighteen *vishaya* of Rājēndra-Chōḷa', under the control of persons identified as *valangai* of Tondaimandalam. Commenting on this important record, Nilakanta Sastri sees in it the capacity of local people to thwart the efforts of a 'self-willed and autocratic ruler' and the expression of a 'popular consciousness [that] there was a clear limit to the taxing power of the government . . . .'[57] According to Professor Sastri, this epigraph records a unilateral modification of revenue arrangements imposed upon the local peasantry by a Chola revenue adminstrator.

There are several reasons for suggesting a different interpretation of this inscription. It is, first of all, extremely unlikely that the Chola overlords presumed to establish a system of detailed rates on all the specific sources of revenue mentioned in the record:

[56] Ch. III.

[57] *The Cōḷas*, p. 539.

the machinery for such control was simply not there. It is further questionable whether the rates set for land tax (*mēlvāram*) in this record — one-fifth for forest and dry crop tracts and one-third for tank-irrigated paddy land — was for the benefit of the Chola state at all.

Nilakanta Sastri and other historians of medieval South India have taken the term *mēlvāram* to mean 'government's share', when it means: 'major', 'higher', or 'first' share.[58] *Mēlvāram* is characteristically used in relationship to the division of produce from the land; it designates the major share claimed by those who held dominant land rights. *Kuḍi-* (cultivator) or *kīl-* (inferior) *vāram* was the lesser share. In his discussion of revenue terms, Nilakanta Sastri does not include *mēlvāram* among a somewhat doubtful list of terms,[59] but, on the contrary, in his discussion of relations between those who cultivate and those who control the land, *mēlvāram* figures very prominently.[60] The equation of 'major share' or *mēlvāram* with 'government share' from cultivated land is based upon nomenclature of the British ryotwari system rather than upon early South Indian practice. The British adopted this well-established term relating to divisions of produce between what they regarded as 'landlord and tenant', then, assuming the politic fiction that the government was landlord, the British claimed the right to a substantial portion of produce.[61] However, in its historical context, there is no connection between the *mēlvāram* and the share which may have gone to the 'state' during the Chola period.[62]

The order executed by those in control of the Avani locality, calling themselves *valangai* of Tondaimandalam, was addressed to the local, ruling groups over whom the control of Tondaimandalam soldiery had been extended by conquest at some earlier time. In Nilakanta Sastri's discussion of this record, it is treated

[58] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3356.

[59] *The Cōḷas*, pp. 521-3; among the more improbable taxes enumerated is one upon begging *(iraru)* !

[60] Ibid., pp. 585-6.

[61] Examples of this usage: H.R. Pate, *Tinnevelly Gazetteer*, Government Press, Madras 1917, pp. 283, 321; A.F. Cox, *North Arcot Manual*, Government Press, Madras, 1895, p. 282.

[62] This view is supported further by the use of the term as understood by others who have worked on the Chola records; *see S.I.T.I., Glossary*, p. xxxvii; K.M. Gupta, op. cit., p. 192; Appadorai, v. 1, op. cit., pp. 172-3, 176-7, 325.

as a protest 'against unusual levies' of a 'self-willed and autocratic ruler or chieftain'.[63] But, the inscription is cast in quite usual terms with a laudatory preamble dedicated to the Chola king; it is not an obvious record of protest though it does declare that an order of the *adigārgaḷ-sōḻa-mūvēndavēḷār* would not be followed. The *mūvēndavēḷar* referred to in the inscription as having promulgated this new and inappropriate revenue regulation could of course have been an agent of the Chola overlords or perhaps a well-placed military officer acting on his own behalf.[64] But, it is most likely that this person was a leader of the conquering Tondaimandalam *valangai* forces claiming to exercise the superior prerogatives of a chief. In any case, as Nilakanta Sastri has noted, defiance of his orders are clear: ' . . . there being no tax on cows and she-buffaloes since the rise of the sacred family of Chōḷas in the Sōlamaṇḍalam nāḍu [or] in the Jayaṅgoṇḍa-Śōla-maṇḍalam . . . no such tax should be paid in accordance with the order of the . . . Śōḻa-mūvēndavēḷār . . . .'[65] If it is supposed that, like the warrior spokesmen of the *valangai* of Āvani, this mūvēndavēlār personage was part of a conquering Chola army, then the conflict was between him and others of the conquering force which had taken up residence in and was claiming control over this tract. Claimed by the latter were the same rights as they enjoyed in Tondaimandalam. The demand for an enhancement of payments from this tract by a tax on milch animals was therefore rejected by those in control of the area on the basis of custom followed in the neighbouring area from which they had come.

While expressly rejecting the special and, to those Tondaimanda-

[63] *The Cōḷas*, p. 539.

[64] As with many other 'officials' of the Chōla state, the *mūvēndavēlān* is difficult to relate to administrative functions. An officer with this title adjudicated a dispute involving a temple in Ennayiram, alias *rājarāja-chaturvēdimaṅgalam*, in which it was granted land taxes as low as other temples of the place; 330/1917, dated A.D. 1048. Another record of an audit of accounts of a temple in Tiruverkadu (Sriperembur taluk, Chingleput) names an officer with this title; 386/1958-9, dated A.D. 1054. *See* M. Arokaiswami, 'The Inscriptional Term "Muvendavelan"', *Journal of Indian History*, v. 34 (April 1956) in which he concludes that the term refers to Vellalas (p. 192), but little else; also *see* the discussion *infra*, ch. III.

[65] *E.C.*, v. 10, pt 2, p. 87. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri in *The Cōḷas*, p. 538, mistakenly speaks of 'the 78 nāḍus of Nigarilḷi-sōḻa-maṇḍalam'; 'Nigarili' does not appear in this record; cf. English translation and the Tamil text provided in *E.C.*, v. 10, pt 2, p. 54, line 12; also cf. translation of K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches*, v. 1, p. 351.

lam colonists in control of the locality, inappropriate demand for this tax, the rates of revenue to be paid to them as the land controllers of the locality were explicitly stated. This could only have been meant for those who cultivated the land around Avani, or the 'eighteen *vishaya* of Rājēndra-Chōḷa and Kaṇḍamādam', as the place was called. An interesting postscript to the inscription throws light on who the latter might have been.

Shortly after the A.D. 1072 inscription was engraved, it was defaced.[66] A new record, dated in the same year, was accordingly incised stating:

> We [the inhabitants] of the eighteen great vishaya and the great army of the right hand [*valangai*], armed with great weapons, have also caused it to be engraved in stone that those who [violate] this order shall incur the heinous sin of having destroyed Brāhmaṇas, herds of tawny cows, and Varaṇāsi and shall become hereditary enemies of the great vishaya and the great army of the right hand armed with great weapons while those who maintain this order shall acquire the merit of having performed many horse sacrifices . . .[67]

The strongly worded imprecation of this postscript to the Avani record of A.D. 1072 appeals to well-recognized moral sanctions (e.g. the sin of destroying Brahmans and so on), to retribution from the Tondaimandalam *valangai*, and, interestingly, to kingly honour in the form of the horse sacrifice. The last suggests an effort to influence local chiefs. It is moreover reasonable to assume that the defacement of the original inscription was done under the orders of or with the complicity of the ancient ruling groups of the Avani locality in protest against the revenue demands made upon them and their cultivators specified in the record of the Tondaimandalam *valangai*. These demands, even with the tax on livestock excluded, were probably greater than those which had existed before; in any case, after all, it was not for the benefit of local cultivators that the general tax on kine was rejected, but for the benefit of those who had invested themselves with superior rights through conquest, the Tondaimandalam *valangai* colonists. It would be they who would enforce this regulation.

As mentioned, the A.D. 1072 records of Avani are among those

[66] *E.C.*, v. 10, pt 2, Mulbagal, no.119, A.D. 1072. The epigraphist noted that this record was presumably meant to substitute for gaps in the original inscription, no.49a, which had been 'defaced'.

[67] Ibid.

rare documents which do not relate to a temple endowment or to temple business, but to the resolution of some problem. It is even more rare in recording the explicit rejection and modification of an order of a *mūvēndavēḷār* or some similar personage of authority. However, the reasons for the rejection are not difficult to understand.

The Avani region of Kolar was an ancient, settled, apparently prosperous area of Telugu agriculturists when it came under Chola dominance through the military enterprise of Tondaimandalam *valangai* soldiers. Inscriptions from the neighbourhood of Avani from as early as the fourth century A.D. speak of the region as part of *āndhra-maṇḍala*, or 'Telugu country', and it was a celebrated place of antiquity and sanctity — *āvantikakshētra* — associated with Valmiki, composer of the *Ramayana*. Its sacred places during the tenth century included several devoted to figures in the Rama legend as well as a Smartha *matha*.[68] The Chola conquest therefore involved the displacement of quite ancient, local ruling families, or at least their subordination to the recently intrusive Tondaimandalam *valangai*. It is scarcely surprising therefore to discover evidence of altered revenue arrangements under the new overlords of Avani and its general neighbourhood. It is not surprising either to find resistence to these arrangements by the local Telugu cultivators of the place and their chiefs who were only recently subjugated by a people with a different language and customs. The defacement of the original A.D. 1072 inscription and the postscript added later may be attributed to the fact of this conquest.

Still puzzling, though, is the repudiation of the bovine tax order in the Avani inscription. As there is no further evidence on the matter, it is assumed that the revenue rates established in A.D. 1072 were put into effect. On that assumption, it cannot be seriously considered that the defacement of the order which prompted the strong imprecation of the postscript was the work of the *mūvēndavēḷār adigāirgaḷ*. Such a feeble response to the rebuff of the *valangai* colonists of Avani would appear unworthy of one with the title of *mūvēndavēḷār* unless it were to be thought that the title could be claimed and recognized as appropriate by persons of very modest coercive capacities. This is, of course, a possibility and one consistent with the view of *mūvēndavēḷār* which is pro-

[68] Lewis B. Rice, 'Mudayanun Plates of Saka 261 of the Bana King Malladeva-Nandivarman', *Indian Antiquary*, v. 15 (June 1886), pp. 174-5.

posed below. However, the more prudent reading of this aspect of the Avani record is that, whatever the power of the *adigāriga*ḷ, the rebuff was accepted by him. This is to agree with Nilakanta Sastri's interpretation of the inscription as evidence of the ability of local power holders to thwart unacceptable impositions, even by one who may himself have been a *valangai* chief of the forces of conquering Tondaimandalam agriculturists.

The left hand, *idangai*, division of lower social groups in the macro region during the Chola period was as certainly associated with mercantile and craft occupations as the right-hand division was with agrarian activities. The core *idangai* groups in all parts of the macro region were certain merchants and craftsmen conventionally expressed by the numeral 'five' as in the terms *pañchaḷar* (or *pañchaḷāttār* or *pañch-kammāḷar*) and *añjuvaṇṇam*.[69] These usually included goldsmiths, silversmiths, blacksmiths, and skilled carpenters and stone cutters. Others characteristically associated with the left division, according to evidence of the eighteenth century, were oil processers using presses operated by two or more bullocks, implying supplies of raw materials and markets which might be found in urban places. Certain weavers were also of the division according to later evidence, though most were of the right division. In the case of weavers, there appears to be no particular reason for the association with the left division unless scale of operation and production for the market (rather than for a fixed clientele) was a factor for weavers as it appeared to be for oil producers.

It is possible to project the seventeenth and eighteenth century occupational alignment of the left division backward in time. One important link with the past is found in *rathakāra* inscriptions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Craftsmen identified as *rathakāra* had enjoyed an ancient honourable status according to Vedic and later Vedic sources,[70] but by the early centuries of the Christian era they had come to be regarded as Sudras according

[69] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xlviii; also p. vi where reference is made to the redundant term *añju-panchaḷāttār*.

[70] *See* A.A. Macdonnell and A.B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, v. 2, London, 1912, p. 265 and F. Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, 14, 'The Sacred Books of the Āryas as Taught by the Schools of Apastamba. . . .', p. xxxviii.

to the *Amarakosa*.[71] Reflecting the early high status of *rathakāra* in South India, a late fourth century Pallava copperplate inscription found in the Krishna district of modern Andhra, dated in the fourteenth year of Nandivarman I, records the grant of an *agrahara* to one of the *rathakāra* caste who was called a *chātuvejja*, that is, one who has studied the four Vedas.[72]

Craftsmen of a later period occasionally used the *rathakāra* designation in what must be considered an attempt to strengthen their claims to high status. A well known inscription from Uyyakondan-Udaiyar (Tiruchirapalli taluk) of A.D. 1118[73] records a gathering of learned Brahmans (*bhaṭṭa*) at Rajasraya-chaturvedimangalam to consider the status of a group of craftsmen, including goldsmiths and silversmiths, carpenters, stone cutters and masons calling themselves *rathakārar*.[74] Having examined sastric authorities,[75] the Brahmans concluded that since *rathakārar* were of high and correct birth (*mahishya* and *anulōma*),[76] they were entitled to the sacred thread investiture and access to other important rituals. Another *rathakāra* inscription from Alangudi, alias Jananatha-chaturvedi-mangalam (Nannilam taluk, Tanjavur) of A.D. 1264[77] records an agreement among craftsmen calling themselves *rathakārar*, to raise a fund from among their number in specified localities for the construction of a pavilion in that *brahmadeya*.[78]

[71] D.D. Kosambi, 'The Working Class in the Amarakosa , *Journal of Oriental Research*, v. 24 (1955), p. 60.

[72] *E.I.*, v. 31, no.1, 'Two Śālaṅkāyana Charters from Kanukollu (Guḍivāda Taluk, Krishna District)', p. 3.

[73] *A.R.E.* 1909, para. 45, 479/1908.

[74] The activities with which these craftsmen were associated were: architecture, building coaches and chariots, constructing temple towers *(gopuram)* with sculptures on them, preparation of instruments used by Brahmans in worship (i.e. ladle or *sṛik*), constructing pavilions (*maṇḍapam*), and making jewels for kings (ibid.).

[75] Among those mentioned are: Yajnavalkya, Gautama, Kautilya, and Bodhayana (ibid.).

[76] The terms used to define their 'good birth' were, *māhishyasa, karani,* and *anulōma*. *Māhishyasa,* sons of Kshatriya fathers and Vaisya mothers, were the fathers of the *rathakāras; karaṇi*, daughters of Vaisya fathers and Sudra mothers, were their mothers; thus, the father in each case was of the higher varna, making it a superior, *anulōma,* mixed-varna birth (ibid.).

[77] Discussed by K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Largest Provincial Organizations in Ancient India', *QJMS*, v. 45, no.2 (1954), pp. 77 ff, and Sundaram, op. cit., pp. 31 ff.

[78] This record provides an excellent source of ancient locality names in several modern taluks of modern Tanjavur. These are listed in Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Largest

The fund was to be created from a special cess, *iṇavari*, upon craftsmen, and it was to be collected by Saivite temple functionaries,[79] in the named localities. Among the signatories of the order were carpenters and goldsmiths. It may safely be assumed, with the epigraphist K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, that the four classes of artisans referred to in the Alangudi inscription were *pañchaḷar* or Kammalar, the core group of the left division of that early time and later.[80] They had simply appropriated *rathakārar* myths involving the god Visvakarma and his priest, Kasyapa.[81]

Another element of evidence linking those using the ancient *rathakārar* title with left division artisans of the medieval period is to be found in the identification of *rathakārar* as *kīḻ-kaḻaṉai*, subordinate professional people,[82] who seemed to have lived in separate residential quarters (*cēri*) in larger villages.[83] An inscription of A.D. 1036 from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-Brahman inhabitants of superior status, *kuḍigaḷ*, and those of inferior status, *kīḻ-kaḻaṉai*.[84] The *kuḍigal* included two merchant groups, *śaṅkarappāḍiyar* and *vyāpārin*,[85] plus three groups usually associated with the right division: Vellala, Saliyar (cloth merchants) and Pattinavar (fishermen). The subordinate workmen, *kīḻ-kaḻaṉai*, were *taccar* (carpenters), *kollar* (blacksmiths), *taṭṭar* (goldsmiths),

Provincial Organizations . .' *QJMS*, v. 45, no.2, p. 79.

[79] Called *vīra-māhēśvaras* in line 9 of the record (ibid.).

[80] Ibid.

[81] In the Urrattur record cited above, the *idangai* claim to be created to kill demons who disturbed the sacrifices of Kasyapa (*A.R.E.* 1913, para. 39). According to the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, Kasyapa was the priest of the god Visvakarma; P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, v. 2, pt II (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1930-62, p. 840). Srinivasachari (op. cit., p. 80), cites references in the *Tondaimandalam Śatakam* associating artisans with the god Visvakarma; Thurston (op. cit., VII, p. 362) also records myths of the Kammalar in which their descent is traced from Visvakarma; according to a Nellore inscription of the eleventh century, a grant to a temple was made by members of the Visvakarma caste (*A.R.E.* 1954-5, no.35 or *Inscriptions of the Nellore District*, p. 818, no.50).

[82] *S.I.T.I., Glossary*, p. xxii, *kalaṉai* and xxvii, *kil-kalaṉai*.

[83] Mentioned in Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', op. cit., p. 35.

[84] *E.I.*, v. 22, no.24, p. 146.

[85] *śaṅkarappāḍiyar* are discussed by Subrahmanya Aiyer; the relative status of *vyāpārin* is touched on in a fifteenth century Sanskrit work, *Vaiśyavamsaśudhākara* (*in* V. Raghavan, 'The 'Vaiśyavamsásudhākara' of Kolacala Malinatha', *New Indian Antiquary*, v. 2 (1939-40), p. 444).

and *kōliyar* (weavers).[86] The epigraphist Hultzsch, in discussing some inscriptions of a slightly earlier period, A.D. 1013, noted the term '*kammāṇachēri*' and hazarded that this was the residential quarter of the *kammāḷar*, or artisans; the propinquity of the artisans' quarters to those of the *paraiyaṇ*, '*paṟaiccēri*', suggested the low status of the artisans.[87] Thus, whatever the high status of the *rathakārar* in ancient times, and notwithstanding the use which craftsmen of the Chola period sought to make of this ancient status in assuming the title of *rathakārar*, they had come to be identified with middling and even poor rank in the eleventh century.

During the twelfth century, however, the status of artisans and merchants associated with the left division began to change. The Polonnaruva (Sri Lanka) inscription of the first quarter of the twelfth century speaks of the *idangai vēḷaikkārar* for the first time and merchant groups later to be mentioned prominently.[88] This record suggests strongly that the *idangai vēḷaikkārar* were the military arm of the merchants marking the beginning of the rise to prominence of the great itinerant guilds whose military power was so conspicuous for the next two centuries.[89] At the same time, artisans of the left division began to demand and to receive privileges which marked an enhancement of their status. A series of inscriptions from the Kongu country during the late twelfth century refer to the *Kammalar* of *vengāḷanāḍu* (modern Karur taluk) who claimed for themselves the right to use the double conch and drums at times of marriages and funerals, to use footwear (*ciruppu*), and to cover their houses with plaster as a mark of their respectability.[90] The interpretation by Dr M. Arokiaswami of these Kongu inscriptions, is that *valangai* colonists of the region, including Vellalas and Kaikkolars, had oppressed those of the left-hand faction until the intervention of the Chola ruler, Kulottunga III was brought by the left division leaders there, the Kammalar.[91]

[86] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 2, p. 1197, *kōlakan*.

[87] *S.I.I.*, v. 2, 47n, 63n.

[88] *E.I.*, v. 18, no.38, lines 25-39 in which the *vaḷañjiyar* are referred to as the leaders of those making the grant to the temple of the Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka; *nagarattār*, local merchants in contrast to the *vaḷañjiyar* who appear to be itinerant merchants *(nānādēśi)*, are also mentioned in this inscription. See the discussion by T.N. Subramaniam, *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, pp. 63-4.

[89] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 65.

[90] *S.I.I.*, v. 3, no.46; also *see* M. Arokiaswami, 'Social Developments Under the Imperial Cōḷas', *T.A.S.S.I.*, 1956-7, p. 5.

[91] Ibid.

Developments similar to these were taking place in Andhra and Karnataka as well as in Tamil country. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, merchants and artisans of Andhra attained strikingly public presence for the first time, particularly in the relatively densely settled parts of the Andhra plain called Vengi, comprising modern East Godavari, Krishna, and Guntur districts. In these places there are numerous temple inscriptions which record gifts of merchants calling themselves, 'the lords of Punugonda' and often citing *gotra* names.[92] Itinerant merchants plying extensive trade networks between Karnataka and Andhra endowed temples in these regions as well as in Tamil country. These endowments are recorded in inscriptions which extoll the virtue, bravery, and dharmic pursuits of their members.[93] Artisans of Karnataka, calling themselves Vira Panchala, had formed special relationships with certain temples and seminaries (*mathas*) such as the Airiya-kula-matha in the Hoysala capital of Dorosamudra (modern Halebid, Hassan district);[94] artisans of Andhra, with the name *pañchaṇamuvāru*, were also associated with particular temples of the time and even referred to themselves as a corporate group.[95] Among the most self-consciously striving groups of the time were the oil-mongers (*teliki*) of Bezwada and its vicinity. They called themselves, 'the one-thousand', and in their records of the eleventh and twelfth centuries boast of being the hereditary servants of the Eastern Chalukya rulers of the area. According to a copperplate inscription of A.D. 1084, Teliki bridal couples were given the special right to visit the king on horseback and to obtain offerings of betel from his hand.[96]

Changes in the status of the left division people during the twelfth century were dependent upon changes in South Indian society. New importance was accorded to urban artisans and merchants as a result of the temple urbanization of the period. With

[92] Sundaram, op. cit., pp. 62-4.

[93] Ibid.; also *see* Burton Stein, 'Coromandel Trade in Medieval India', pp. 50-1.

[94] S. Chandrasekhara Sastri, 'Economic Conditions Under Hoysalas', *The Half-Yearly Mysore University Journal*, v. 2 (1928), pp. 216-17.

[95] Sundaram, op. cit., p. 26, in which these artisans also refer to themselves as 'the Seventy-four community' and ibid., p. 30, in which they are associated with the Kamatesvara temple. Also, Narasimha Rao, op. cit., pp. 64-75.

[96] The 'Teki Plates of the 17th year of Kulōttunga I', according to *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 68, which should give the year as A.D. 1087; however Sundaram, op. cit., p.37, gives the date as A.D. 1084.

that came a fundamental modification of the position of mercantile and craft groups from that of the previous centuries when they were not only constrained to accept a subordinate place in relation to the dominant peasantry, but to suffer the indignity of a corporate status of pollution which is ineluctably associated with the left-hand.

The terms *valangai* and *idangai* and *balagey* and *edagey* literally mean 'right hand and left hand' in Tamil and Kannada. While it is possible to attach excessive importance to the simple positional distinction of left and right, there is ever-present the taint of pollution owing to the use of the left hand in bodily functions. It is also well to recognize the distinction of left and right at the level of ritual. The designation of left-hand has been attached to corrupt or perverse forms of worship called *vāmīs* (from *vāma*: 'left-side' or 'reverse') which are secret Tantric ritual forms of Siva worship.[97] This distinction is illustrated by the early sixteenth century story of how the Saivite teacher Appaya Dikshit of Kalahasti sought to discredit a Vaishnava teacher of the Tatacharya family by accusing him of having given a blessing to the Vijayanagara king, Achyutadevaraya, with his left hand as he did with people of the lower castes.[98]

Various explanations have been offered for the left-and right-hand designations. Macleane's suggested that the 'hands' imagery arose from the fact of five artisan groups of the left division, the *pañchaḷar* or Kammalar, as opposed to five non-artisan castes — i.e. as fingers on a hand. This is clearly unacceptable, for the number here, 'five', is as conventional as the number 'ninety-eight' which is used for each division in many of the sources.[99] The more usual explanations about the right and left hand are positional: people of the *valangai* being on the right-hand side of gods, sages, Brahmans, or kings in some legendary context in which status was determined.[100] G. Oppert appears to have been the first to notice the implication of ritual pollution in the

[97] H.H. Wilson, *Essays and Lectures in the Religion of the Hindus*, London, 1862, pp. 250-61 and M. Monier-Williams, *Hinduism*, London, 1906, p. 126. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 941.

[98] R. Shama Shastry, 'Sivananda's Life of Appaya Dikshit', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 11 (1920-1), pp. 116-17.

[99] *Manual of Madras Administration*, v. 1, p. 69.

[100] These positions are mentioned in various sources; *see* Srinivasachari, op. cit., p. 85 and *A.R.E.* 1913, para. 39.

right-and left-hand division. He attributed the dual division with its pollution implications to the conflict between Jainas and Hindus during the pre-Pallavan period. In this connection, Oppert stated: 'The influence of Jains was perhaps strongest in the towns where artisan classes form an important portion of the population, while the Brahmans appealed to the land owning and agricultural classes.'[101]

While Brahmans remained neutral with respect to the divisions, Jainas were apparently associated with the left-hand division, *edagey*, in Karnataka until A.D. 1368 when the Vijayanagar ruler, Bukka Raya, intervened in a dispute involving Vaishnavas and Jainas over sect emblems and decreed that Jainas were to be considered members of the right-hand division.[102] As suggested above in the discussion of the Pallava period, the nominally religious conflict which was bitterly carried out during that early period was based upon important ideological factors. Under the Pallavas and their peasant and Brahman supporters, Jainism was treated as a dangerous error, and association with Jaina teachers and institutions polluting. Oppert pointed to a similar orientation of the Chola rulers toward the Jainas and the Jaina-supporting Hoysalas.[103]

Considering the stigma of pollution which attached to the left-hand, it is to be wondered that those of the *idangai* would have acquiesced in the title. That they did is clear from the Urrattur inscriptions cited above and numerous other inscriptional and literary documents of the *idangai* which are to be found in all parts of the macro region. There are numerous references to regular local dues collected from the left-hand people as *iḍaṅgai-vari* as well as subscriptions collected from and on behalf of the division, the *iḍaṅgai-magamai*.[104] During the earliest period for which there are records, it appears that the *idangai* occupied an inferior and perhaps despised position among people of the region. Later, in the twelfth century and after, when *idangai* groups undertook to alter their positions with respect to the dominant peasant population, they continued to identify themselves by the *idangai* title notwithstanding that this title might have originally been a

[101] Oppert, op. cit., p. 62.
[102] Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, v. 2, pt 3, p. 1483.
[103] Cited in Srinivasachari, op. cit., p. 84.
[104] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 2, p. 729; *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xxxii.

sign of their degraded status in the society of the macro region. The title was retained until the nineteenth century in most places.

Apart from Oppert and, recently, Arjun Appadurai, few modern commentators on the right-left divisions in South Indian society recognize the signification of impurity or pollution which accompanies left symbolism;[105] none—including these two—addresses the question of why those of the left division accepted its derogatory designation. Appadurai notes: 'As in other cultural systems, the left-hand in South India has connotations of impurity whereas the right-hand has powerful and positive normative associations. . . .'[106] Where Oppert explains the designation as originating in the success of the Brahman-led Hinduism of agriculturists over the 'heretical' Jaina artisans and merchants of pre-Pallavan trade centres, he does not ask why the presumed denigrating 'left' title persisted and, especially, why those of the left division continued to use it in their own records later. Nor does Appadurai's thoughtful and bold explanation of the division as a 'root paradigm' of conflict[107] permit us to understand finally why, if, as he says, the left-hand connotes impurity, those of the *idangai* use that title.

A possible explanation of this puzzling phenomenon is that the utility of the *idangai* title as a well-established symbol of identity outweighed for its users of the Chola period and later any stigma which might have attached to the title from an earlier time. It is after all not only in the labels which are affixed upon or chosen by a group that basic significance inheres, for new myths can be made to offset older meanings. The proud adoption of the label 'Slav' (from 'slave') in nineteenth century Europe and the more recent use of the label 'Black' in American society remind us of this property of ethnic labels and labelling. The capacity of ethnic labels to serve as symbols of identity and mobilization — whatever the origin of the labels and their possibly once derogatory

[105] Arjun Appadurai, 'Right and Left Hand Castes', p. 221.

[106] Loc. cit..

[107] The concept of 'root paradigm' is taken by Appadurai from Victor Turner: '. . . these are consciously recognized cultural models which emerge during the life-crises of individuals or groups, and have reference to the social relationships of those involved, as well as to the cultural, ideological or cognative patterns which incline them to alliance on divisiveness. . . . As a root paradigm in South Indian history, the function of this particular metaphor is to give expression to a wide variety of empirical conflicts, anomalies and antagonisms' (loc. cit.).

connotations — explains as well as any reason why the title 'left' or 'left-hand' continued to be used by a substantial number of South Indians even after the twelfth century when those using the title found impressive new opportunities and importance.

Summary and Conclusion

The span of the dual division of lower castes in South India extended over eight centuries. Only a brief part of that span has been examined here, and this early phase of its development may not have been its most important phase. Evidence from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggests that the dual divisions provided an essential means by which many lower castes in South India improved their means of coping with the extra-ordinary changes attending the development of British institutions, particularly those of towns and cities.

However, urban contexts are of little consequence during most of the Chola period, and, to the extent that urbanization became important in the late Chola period, it contributed to the weakening of the state and to changes in the society of the macro region previously within its authority. It is especially during the Vijaya-nagara period and, later, during the British period, that towns assume an importance not known before, except, perhaps, during the Classical age of the *Cilapadikaram*. Of this most early period, only speculation is possible and that is the subject of an appending note on origins of the dual divisions.

During the Chola period, several characteristics distinguish the divisions from their later history and from other elements of Chola society apart from the rural context in which they operated. Among the most important are the military and colonization activities of each of the divisions. The eleventh century Avani inscription of the Tondaimandalam *valangai* from modern Kolar district and several *idangai* records from modern South Arcot pertain to these matters. Each portrays conquest groups who have successfully installed themselves in new territories and exercise dominance over them. In these inscriptions and others, another function of the divisions was the assimilation of persons previously beyond the expanding frontier of the sedentary agricultural order. This is attested in the two thirteenth century inscriptions from Urrattur in modern Tiruchirapalli and Varanjuram in modern

South Arcot. Both places would appear to have been zones of recent agricultural expansion in the thirteenth century; both were located on the edges of older riverine settlement areas. Such newly assimilated folk did not gain new identities, but, having been granted appropriate insignia, were associated with others in the loose alliance structure of a division — usually the left division — and thus eligible for the support of others of the division when that was required. They also became eligible for participation in the occasional military forays which expanded the land under regular cultivation and settlement; they finally supported temples by occasional cesses and subscriptions (*vari* and *magamai*) and thus became eligible for participation in forms of temple worship and perhaps temple honours from which they would otherwise be excluded.

These functions were occasional; the divisions were not absolute, corporate, or continuous, but potential groupings. This conception is admittedly an unexpected one and jars the presuppositions which any student of Hindu society brings to the study of the subject. For, the divisions of the right and the left are not only occasional in their organization and functions, but they also appear to be without the internally ranked segmentation characteristic of Hindu institutions. They resemble sodalities or sectarian groupings in these respects, except that there is no core continuity as might be provided to cults by joint worship at specific tutelary or even canonical shrines, nor is there the evidence, except in post-Chola times, of an *āchārya* or a guru who might serve as leader of the divisions in particular places. The divisions resemble more the modern socio-political caste associations in linking spatially dispersed groups possessing some shared ethnic identifications or interests into active associations for occasional cooperation. Like the modern movements, myths were promulgated by the divisions to justify their existence, and, like the modern movements, joint efforts may have involved conflict with others over rights to certain symbols (e.g. thirteenth century artisans of the left division demanded and received the right to the use of the conch and to sandals just as the nineteenth century Nadars claimed the breast cloth). These joint efforts might also involve cooperation in the support of certain activities (e.g. medieval temple endowments and modern 'temple entry' rights, modern school hostels and cooperative housing societies). The analogue of the dual divisions

and modern caste associations may be pressed further. In both cases, public conflict with adversaries was resolved by the intervention of legitimate authority. Chiefs, kings and Brahmans play an increasingly public part in the records of the dual divisions during the later Chola period just as British officials do in the conflicts between the divisions from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. In the latter cases, conflicts at times give the impression of being staged or promoted by members of one or the other division in order to produce intervention and legitimate adjudication. This would seem to have been the strategy of caste associations in more recent times, and 'agitational politics' is the term that has come to be applied to the execution of that strategy. During the Chola period, these strategies can hardly be identified from the relatively few and dispersed inscriptions, but the forms do appear to be present, and they are to become clearer during the Vijayanagara period under the intensified processes of urbanization and political change.

In Chola times, the divisions of the right and left present themselves as linking formations concerned with military activities, expansion of agrarian forms of the age, and the assimilation of new peoples to the society of the age. Linkages were essentially horizontal, that is the divisions brought into potential alliance structures those groups of neighbouring *nadu* localities whose interests were not represented in the dominant *nattar* of the locality. Lower agricultural groups, various artisans and traders of agricultural commodities, as well as field labourers could rely less and less upon the protection of their interests by the dominant *nattar* of their isolated localities. Even more hazardous was the position of these artisan and merchant groups whose economic activities articulated poorly with the agricultural economy, whose products were not exchanged in the nexus of agricultural patron-client relations, but exchanged more widely and impersonally; whose economic fortunes, therefore, were often tied closely to itinerant merchants seen as little better than bandits by settled agriculturists, and whose pasts were tainted by urban and heretical connections which, added to everything else, made them objects of suspicion and disdain.

To both such disadvantaged groups — lower agricultural groups and mobile artisan-traders — alliances across ancient *nadu* lines provided a measure of security and political leverage with respect

to the notables of each *nadu*, the *nattar*. These horizontal linkages across *nadu* boundaries complemented and were probably the consequence of the vertical integration of *nadu*s during the time of the great Cholas, Rajaraja I and Rajendra I, when the Chola segmentary state was being perfected. The local beneficiaries of this vertical integration were the most powerful of the *nattar* who, in accepting the ritual sovereignty of these great kings and imitating their royal style, separated themselves as an increasingly powerful, local ruling stratum. This political development is treated below in ch.VII. However, even as the horizontal linkages among the less powerful occupational groupings was occurring as a means of fortifying their interests against the increased prestige and power of the *nattar*, the latter were themselves establishing horizontal linkages with dominant agricultural groups like themselves in neighbouring localities, creating the *periyanadu*, or 'greater *nadu*' which comes into historical view during the twelfth century. To this and to related changes during the twelfth century attention must now be given.

A Note on Origins

Discussion of the right and left divisions during the Chola period has been shaped by the necessity of examining the fragmentary evidence of this early period in the light of the more complete information of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. However great the gaps in evidence and understanding of the dual divisions between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, these are as nothing compared to the difficulties of considering the origins of the divisions. The vagueness with which the dual social divisions may be seen in the period from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries may appear to make suggestions about origins particularly hazardous. However, it is precisely because knowledge about the divisions is so fragmentary at this time and even later that any analysis must imply a set of notions about their origins. Such implicit notions are best made explicit.

The development of the dual division of lower castes appears as the consequence of two significant structural features of the society of the macro region during its early history. These are the territorial segmentation of society and culture, and the ambiguous social status of the non-Brahman population given the commitment

to Brahmanical ideology by the Pallava period. Early attempts by peoples of the macro region to cope with these structural features produced a status system pivoting upon the power of the peasantry of the numerous localities into which the southern peninsula was divided. For a substantial portion of the population — those who were not of the dominant peasant groups — the status system of the Pallava and most of the Chola periods was unsatisfactory, and by the eleventh century, merchants and artisans along with their urban and rural dependents — began to function independently of and to some extent in opposition to peasant leaders of local society. This modification occurred without altering the basic territorial segmentation of society or the ambiguous status positions of non-Brahmans in South India, and the dual social divisions of the eleventh century were to remain important for centuries. Membership in, or at least association or alliance with, established status groupings in an increasingly stratified society was the principal motivation for the division. The process of an expanding agrarian system — partly by military means, partly by peaceful means — created the need to assimilate new peoples; this was an important feature of the Pallava and early Chola periods. In this process, occupational and residential groupings were the prime organizational *loci*. The expanding requirements for the services of essentially urban-based merchants and artisans provided the opportunity for the development.

The emergence of groups identifying themselves as the left division in the eleventh century does not preclude the possibility that there might have been an earlier foundation for such a division. One such hypothesis is that the divisions represent peoples of different racial origin within South India dating from ancient times.[108] Racial admixtures there were, but, apart from the 'Aryan migration' which introduced Brahmanical as well as Jaina and Buddhist institutions, there is no convincing historical evidence of a significant, racially distinct stratification which could account for the divisions as known after the tenth century. Nor does the view here deny a variant of the ancient racial argument which distinguished between 'indigenous' people of a culture area and 'strangers' who took up residence there. The latter hypothesis is supported by occasional references in Karnataka where *nadu*

[108] Hutton, op. cit., pp. 166-8.

and *dēśa* (for strangers) are co-equal with *edagey* and *balagey*.[109] *Valangai vēḷaikkārar* are considered by Srinivasa Iyengar to be 'Tamilians', whereas the *idangai vēḷaikkārar*, according to him, consisted of warriors from Andhra (*vaḍugan*), Kerala (*malaiyāḷar*), and others not of the Chola heartland of Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam.[110] Another manifestation of this 'stranger' versus 'indigenous' classification is in the epigram of the low caste of Paraiyan, invariably associated with the right-hand division in recent centuries: 'the *paraiyar* are not of the left hand, they are Tamilians'.[111] While the conception of 'stranger peoples' may have entered into the dual division, the core elements of the divisions, on both sides, must be considered as 'indigenous'.

Another view of how earlier divisions in the society of the macro region may have served as the basis for the subsequent development of the right- and left-hand divisions appears to be emerging from recent scholarship on the Classical or Sangam era. In the important work of N. Subrahmanian, *Śaṅgam Polity*,[112] there are depicted two, possibly simultaneous social orders. One was urban, cosmopolitan, trade oriented; the other was 'tribal', rural, and relatively simple in economic organization. The interactions between these two disparate social orders are very unclear. Poets of the one order may not have been poets of the other, and while certain cultural continuities existed between the orders — in language and beliefs at least — it is as yet difficult to see them as constituting a single civilization. However, these two orders might have comprised a single society as proposed by Subrahmanian, and this could have established the basic framework for the later, historical divisions.[113]

Such questions of possibly earlier fissures which might have formed the basis of the later divisions cannot be considered in greater detail at this point; the state of our knowledge will not permit that. The need for more archaeological and systematic literary

[109] Rice, *Mysore*, v. I p. 224. An alternative form of *nadu* in this context was given as *pēṭe*.

[110] Srinivasa Iyengar, *Tamil Studies*, pp. 106-7; other groups mentioned included Pallan and Mallar from Pandya country, Bedar from Karnataka, and Madigas from Andhra.

[111] Oppert, op. cit., 64-5 and 65n.

[112] Op. cit.

[113] See this writer's review of the *Saṅgam Polity* in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, v. 5, no.1 (March 1968), pp. 109-15.

research is essential for carrying these speculations beyond the present state. For the purposes of exploring the origins of the divisions our starting place must be restricted to the period when the evidence is superior to that afforded by racial drift theories and the information gained from the undated poems of hundreds of authors. It is to certain of the general characteristics of society which were manifest during the Pallava period and after that attention must be given. Among these is the high degree of territorial segmentation of society and some of the social structural consequences of the mature Brahmanical culture of that time.

Territorial segmentation has referred principally to the isolation of the many locality cores of peasant population, *nadu*s, scattered over the Tamil plain. The degree of isolation conformed with physiographical factors to a significant extent; thus, in the central Kaveri basin, there was less isolation, greater continuity of settlement, than in the western parts of the basin (parts of modern Tiruchirapalli, South Arcot, and Salem) and in the tracts South of the Kaveri. In most of Tondaimandalam, the central Tamil plain, the nodes of peasant settlement conformed with physical features, especially the drainage patterns of the principal streams upon which tank storage of irrigation water depended would have been especially important. Judging from the distribution of ancient inscriptional and modern records referring to the right and left divisions, the greater the degree of isolation among the peasant cores of settlement, the more important and conspicuous was the dual division. The central Kaveri basin appears never to have developed the intensive divisional alignments found in the central portion of the Tamil plain where the dual divisions were both an early and persistent phenomenon with Kanchi serving as the centre for both.

By the late Pallava period, and certainly in the Chola period, Brahman groups were virtually closed, priestly corporations dominated by Smartas of various divisions. Most prestigious, perhaps, were the Vadama Smarta Brahmans. Their names suggest a northern origin (*vaḍa* means 'north'), but the title, *vaḍama* could also refer to the proficiency in Sanskrit and vedic ritual, which then and earlier were associated with the north. Other Smarta Brahmans were divided into territorial sub-divisions.[114] There was also a

[114] These divisions are listed in various places (*see* Thurston, op. cit., v. 1, p. 333 ff.).

smaller group of Brahmans of Vaishnava persuasion, the Vaikanasas; it was not until some centuries later that Vaishnava Brahmans began to constitute a somewhat larger proportion of the Brahman population, and at that later time, the numbers were primarily the result of a shift of Smartas to the fold of the dynamic and expanding Sri Vaishnava *saṁpradāya*s. Increasingly secure and possessing great secular authority in rural settlements over some of which they enjoyed complete control, the Brahman monopoly over higher sacral functions was firm and was to remain so until the thirteenth century. Brahmans were unchallenged in this sacred or secular authority either by rival religions or by warriors determined or disposed to diminish their role. Brahmans thus constituted a strong and impenetrable strata of the contemporary social system. No less clearly defined in this social system were those at the bottom.

Enjoying neither the high ritual status nor the status provided by holding land or possessing skills essential to the maintenance of peasant agrarian operations, agrestic labourers occupied the unambiguously lowest strata of contemporary society. With the expansion of wet rice cultivation based upon secure irrigation sources, the numbers of such persons increased. Partly, these increases represented the assimilation of agricultural groups who had previously cultivated lands deficient in reliable irrigation sources. Such peasants were situated at the margins of productive peasant agriculture. When these marginal tracts were brought under irrigation by the expansion of prosperous and powerful peasant groups with requisite organization, capital (mostly in the form of superior skills but also livestock), adequate manpower, and superior military power, the former occupants of these lands were reduced to labour dependents of the expanding peasantry, or they fled to still more marginal tracts only to be incorporated later or forced once again to flee. Another source of this lowest tier of social groups were those of the forests to whom regular sedentary agricultural pursuits were unknown. When forests were felled by expanding peasant agriculture, as they were throughout the Pallava period, the fate of the forest dwellers was the same as that to whom agricultural labour was already a fulltime though hazardous basis of livelihood.

Apart from the degraded status which attached to those who laboured on the fields of others and were therefore without substantial rights or means for ameliorating their conditions except

the threat of absconding, there were those whose purchase in peasant social organization was even worse, by a slight degree, because they combined some polluting craft with their principal agrestic labour. Such were the leather workers, Sakkiliyar and Madiga, for example, whose low occupational status as field workers was negatively reinforced by their work with leather and the preparation of hides. Others included musicians and dancers who constituted part of the corps of bards in the classical period.[115]

Between the poorest field workers, artisans and artists and the highest strata of priests were the majority of the population. During the recent, modern past, ranking pressures have been the most severe at this level of society consisting of powerful land-controlling peasant groups and wealthy merchants, bankers, and artisans. Beneath these has been a second order of peasants who lacked the means to support a claim to being dominant peasants, *pūmipputirar*, 'sons of the soil'. Finally, there have been many kinds of village artisans and service groups (as washermen, barbers, and potters) whose work was tainted by a not always logical set of pollution norms. Among such varied groups, the terminology dictated by Brahmanical usage, such as 'Sudra', serves no analytical purpose, and, in the recent past, that label has been rejected by those upon whom it was placed by other Indians or by British administrators.

The modern term 'non-Brahman', comes closer than any other to encompassing the middle groups of the early period in the sense of being 'respectable', socially mobile, and yet clearly neither of the highest nor lowest strata. To the modern ear, however, 'non-Brahman', is difficult to disassociate from the twentieth century context when the term was claimed by educated and politically mobilized groups of Tamil Nadu and Andhra bent on displacing Brahmans from what they regarded as places of disproportionate advantage. Still, the term 'non-Brahman' is more appropriate than the *varṇa* terms Vaisya and Sudra in the South Indian context though the latter terms occur in ritual manuals (*āgama*) and inscriptions occasionally. In fact, there appears to be no generic term for those beneath the status of Brahmans in the medieval period or earlier. Sectarian terms such as *cāttātavan* and *śaiva*, denoting votaries of Vishnu and Siva who were not Brahmans,

[115] *See* George L. Hart III, 'Ancient Tamil Literature: Its Scholarly Past and Future', in *Essays on South India*, ed. Burton Stein, University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1975.

are too narrowly circumscribed in their reference. In the corpus of South Indian inscriptions, there occur numerous specific ethno-occupational groups below the status of Brahmans such as: *aḍavimār*, *āyōgavār*, *kaikkōḷar*, *sāligār* (weavers), *aḷavār*, *parampār*, *veḷḷān* (cultivators), *añjuvaṇṇām*, *kammāḷār* (artisans), *paṭṭinavār*, *bharatavār* (fishermen), *davana-cheṭṭi*, *teliki* (merchants), *īlavār* (toddy tappers), *kammakkāṇān* (brazier), *maṇṇān*, *vaṇṇān* (washermen), *manṟāḍi* (shepherd), *nāvisān* (barber), *taiyān* (tailor); and *veṭkōvān* (potter).[116] The terms *idangai* and *valangai* are themselves references to general classes of non-Brahmans, except that the dual divisions included among their most active members those of very low status.

It seems evident that there was little of the rank striving and conflict among local ethnic groupings that one finds in contemporary South India. The nineteenth and twentieth century claims of some middle groups to the status of Brahmans may have occurred earlier; Vellalas and Reddis, dominant peasants of the modern Tamil and Andhra plains, occasionally equated their control over land with the rights of Kshatriyas. Such claims were as irrelevant in an earlier age as they were during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ranking postulates are not based upon unilateral claims, but upon interactions among claimants with each other and with those considered the lowest and most polluted, on the other side.

From the earliest references to the dual divisions, their compositions appear to have included a wide range of groups which in more recent times maintain punctilious differentiation and relative ranking. Yet, the diction of the *idangai* and *valangai* inscriptions and the administrative and judicial records of the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries give no importance to relative rank within the divisions. On the contrary, the divisions represent themselves or are represented as pluralistic collectivities enjoying an apparent equality as in various kinds of sodalities. The critical factor in the divisions of this early period and later was not relative ranking among the constituents, but shared substance and interests. It was not *rank*, but *membership* within a division which was important. Only the very powerful or very marginal could claim

116 These are listed in *S.I.T.I., Glossary*. On p. iv, he suggests the term *agambaḍi-uḍaiyān* as 'citizen' or 'subject' with which were associated other terms. Also see *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 1, p. 12; v. 2, pp. 970, 968, 974.

or afford a position of neutrality (e.g. the status of *madhyasta* in the *Baramahal Records*) with respect to the dual-alliance formations.

The powerful *nattar* were in the best position to separate themselves from others of the ambiguous middle strata. Their economic control and military authority within the framework of the Chola overlordship, their claims to ancient respectability and political primacy, and their close relations with Brahmans all combined to effect this separation. To those less favourably placed, but still important in agrarian relationships — peasant groups of lesser status and certain merchants and artisans — the right division provided alliance support of importance. Craftsmen and merchants less directly involved in agrarian relations sought alliance refuge in the left division, for in the balancing of status and locality solidarity which hinged upon links to the land, they had but poor claims. Moreover, to the extent that such craft and mercantile activities could be identified with the urban social order, they bore an additional status handicap of having been associated with heterodoxy. A core of military forces stood ready to support the latter coalition in the form of armed contingents of itinerant traders.

The supra-local system of dual divisions became evident first in the *valangai* military units of the first of the great Cholas, Rajaraja I. At that time there appears to have been no contending *idangai*. The designation *valangai* at this earlier time may have been the way of referring to the armed peasantry of Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam who had overcome a considerable measure of isolation and had begun to cooperate militarily, first under various chiefs and later under the great Cholas. They had become the weapon, the 'right-hand', of ambitious warrior leaders. These were potential or relative structures, not absolute and continuous ones, as suggested in the term *vēḷai*, in *vēḷaikkārār*, meaning 'occasional'. It was not until two centuries after the first references to essentially localized peasant groups collaborating on wider regional lines for military purposes that the left division appears to have achieved the same degree of supra-local potential organization. Venkayya's view that the existence of the *valangai* soldiers in the time of Rajaraja I implied the existence of the *idangai* would, under this interpretation, be questionable. It is more probable that the prior existence of the peasant-dominated right division led to the development of an opposing division at a later time, that is during the eleventh century.

Removed from the great *brahmadeya* centres of orthodoxy of the tenth and eleventh centuries, which afford the most important sources of information of this period, the rise of the left-hand division and the establishment of a true dual division was slow to be registered. Mobile artisan/trader groups, even after they had shifted their allegiance from the heterodox to the Saivite orthodox faith of the era, probably continued to be held in suspicion. However, such groups could claim an ancient and honourable past during which they enjoyed respectable status if evidence such as the Classical epics, *Cilappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* are to be credited even partially and if the *rathakāra* connection was accepted widely. Neither these artisan/trader groups nor the itinerant traders with whom they were linked would long have willingly accepted the low status which had befallen them in many agrarian settlements. They would, accordingly, seize upon the new opportunities of the twelfth century and after to alter that status. Among the most important of the opportunities were those associated with temple development in that age.

CHAPTER VI

The Transition to Supra-local Integration in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

Significant structural changes occurred during the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries causing instability to the agrarian order consolidated during the reign of Rajaraja I. These changes include: (a) the emergence of assemblies called the *periyanadu* acting over an enlarged locality and signalling diminished isolation among previous nuclear regions, or *nadu*s, and, at the same time, augmenting power in the hands of supra-local leaders of the enlarged locality; (b) the integration of portions of the macro region which had previously been marginal in settlement and importance, but which now emerged as mature agrarian regions including much of the interior area of modern South Arcot which had earlier separated Tondaimandalam from Cholamandalam, and the upland tract of Kongu comprising modern Salem and Coimbatore; and (c) the emergence of a new tier of centres of civilization — towns — which served to integrate the enlarged localities of the period and displaced the earlier civilization centres, *brahmadeya*s, in both sacred and secular functions. These changes — essentially a new ordering of the elements of the earliest period of agrarian integration — provide the clearest explanation of the decline of the Chola state and the establishment of the political culture of the Vijayanagara period. However, supra-local integration of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was transitional in the sense that earlier forms continue to be important for a considerable time longer.

Supra-local assemblies

Beginning in the late twelfth century, there is evidence of impressive integration of local, *nadu* institutions at higher spatial levels than

ever before achieved. These supra-local institutions were first commented upon by the senior epigraphist and historian, K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, in a series of articles entitled, 'The Largest Provincial Organizations in India', published in 1954-5.[1] Most recently, Subbarayalu has stressed the importance of these supra-local assemblies:

> . . . from the beginning of the 12th century, the *Nāḍus* . . . at times transcended their territorial limits through assemblies of the *Chittramēḷi-Periya-Nāṭṭār*. The Periya-Nattar were none other than the *Nāṭṭār* of the whole [of any section of the] country assembled together. . . .[2]

It is well to note that the inscriptions upon which the discussions of Subrahmanya Aiyer and Subbarayalu are based were known at the same time as those of the *mahasabha* institutions, having been collected during the early years of systematic epigraphical activity in South India, around 1890. Yet, the supra-local assemblies never attained the same significance among South Indian historians as did the *brahmadeya*s.

The term, 'supra-local assembly', is used here for *periyanāḍu* in preference to that used by Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'provincial', because of the implication in the latter usage of an intermediate level of the state between the monarchy and the locality. Subrahmanya Aiyer explicitly associates concrete, centrally-directed, administrative functions with these assemblies. Referring to a *periyanadu* which convened at Mannargudi (Tanjavur district) in A.D. 1288, he states that they are seen '. . . exercising the powers of the State in three [ways]: the levying of fees on articles of merchandise, the assignment of revenues so obtained to the temple, and causing the engraving of the transaction on the temple wall'.[3] While a short time later in his discussion he seems to deny the above assertion, stating that it was 'a popular assembly . . . not one appointed by the State',[4] there are other places subsequently

[1] *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45 (New Series), no.1, pp. 29-47; no.2, 70-98; no.4, 270-86; v. 46, no.1, pp. 8-22.

[2] Subbarayalu, op.cit., p. 36.

[3] *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, p. 35.

[4] Ibid., p. 35; the *padineṇ-vishayattōm* 'was . . . a popular assembly . . . not one appointed by the State'. He later states that the 'provincial assembly' 'functioned in place of the king in the country', ibid., no.4, pp. 283-4, 286. Subrahmanya Aiyer cites in support of the latter contention the phrase *rājyapari-pālakānām*, but this term means 'protector of the country' as well as king or ruler (*Tamil Lexicon*, v. 4, p. 2515).

where the same idea of the assemblies as instruments of a central government is again expressed.

The assumption that various kinds of supra-local assemblies of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries were intermediate levels of a centralized state structure is rejected here. In arguing that these assemblies were the instruments of the centralized monarchical state, Subrahmanya Aiyer ignored the overwhelming evidence of a weakened Chola overlordship which most historians recognize. Nor is his assumption supported by any evidence from contemporary records, for nowhere do these records specify explicit delegated functions. Rather, his position is based, somewhat inconstantly as it has been observed, upon the identification of *all* administrative and political functions with a putative centralized state structure. South Indian inscriptions afford too many examples of payments assessed by local groups upon their members for specific purposes and the recording of such arrangements on stone to accept this imputation.

The region comprehended by the term 'supra-local', is vague. It might have varied considerably in different places and at different times. In the late thirteenth century Mannargudi inscription mentioned above,[5] and in two others from the same place, one of a slightly earlier time and the other later,[6] reference is made to supra-local assemblies of *vishayattār* ('people of the country') of eighteen *vishaya*s (*padiṉeṇ-vishayattōm*). A series of records from the same place earlier in the thirteenth century, in the twenty-second regnal year of Rajaraja III, A.D. 1239, register the decision of an assembly which included the *naṭṭavār* (nattar) of five localities (*nadu*s) which are named[7] and can be located in the vicinity of Chidambaram.[8] Whether the *vishaya* and *nadu* territories are the same is not clear; both terms may refer to localities, and they often do.[9] Moreover, whether the reference to 'eighteen *vishaya*s', can be taken literally is highly doubtful, for 'eighteen', like 'one

[5] *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.89; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.40.

[6] *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.95; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.47, dated A.D. 1268; *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.90; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.41, dated A.D. 1313.

[7] *A.R.E.*, 1897, no. 98; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, nos.50, 58; *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.96; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.48.

[8] *See* ibid.

[9] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3744, *viṣayam* is given as 'territory, region of country'; *see* ibid., v. 4, p. 2210, *nāṭu* is given as 'country, district, province' or 'locality' (v. 4).

hundred and eight' or 'one thousand and eighty',[10] appears to have been a conventional number, one of the several sets which serve to cast doubt upon much detail in Indian epigraphy. Dikshit has noted the appelation 'eighteen districts' (Kannada: *hadinenṭu vishaya* or *hadinenṭu nāḍu*) in Gangavadi; he and D. Desai have also drawn attention to the convention in Karnataka of referring to a complete village as one in which the 'eighteen social groups' or 'castes' (Kannada: *hadinenṭu samaya*) were present.[11] One cannot be absolutely certain, therefore, that at Mannargudi the scope of the supra-local assembly grew from the five localities mentioned in A.D. 1239 to eighteen in A.D. 1288; however, it is certainly possible that a relatively small grouping of localities of the early thirteenth century expanded to include others and came to be regarded as a relatively stable circle of cooperating localities as seems suggested in the term, 'eighteen *vishayas*' used in the Mannargudi inscription and in those of other places.[12]

From extant epigraphical evidence alone, supra-local assemblies dealt with only a few functions, though there is the assumption of stable forms of cooperation among constituent locality institutions involving other functions. Most of the records of supra-local assemblies relate to temple endowments, of course. In the Mannargudi inscriptions referred to above, agreements are recorded among local merchants (*nagarattār*), presumably in the areca nut trade, to present a sum of money to two temples of the place in order to support ritual offerings and repairs. These grants were to be raised by a duty on the areca nuts as they passed through octroi posts around the town.[13]

[10] Kanchi is supposed to have had 108 Siva temples and eighteen Vishnu shrines according to P.V. Jagdisa Ayyar (*South Indian Shrines*, Madras, 1920, p. 21); there are supposed to be 108 Vaishnava *pāñcarātra samhitās*, Farquhar, op.cit., p. 182; 108 is the usual number of Brahmans upon whom *brahmadeyas* were conferred, and 108 pots of water were appropriate for the bathing of temple images. K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 1, p. 339.

[11] G.S. Dikshit, *Local Self-Government in Medieval Karnataka*, Karnataka University, Dharwar 1964, pp. 34, 72-3; Dinkar Desai, *The Mahāmaṇḍalēś varas under the Cāḷukyas of Kalyāṇi*, Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay, 1951, pp. 342-3.

[12] The A.D. 1234 record from Narttamalai in Pudukkottai contains the term *paḍiṉeṇ bhūmi* according to *A.R.E.*, 1904, no.364 in *I.M.P.*, v. 3, p. 1640. The Avani record of Kulottunga I, A.D. 1072 refers to the inhabitants of the eighteen *vishayas* (*E.C.*, v. 10, pp.86-7 and K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches . . .*, v. 1, pp. 351-2).

[13] Two of these posts are mentioned in the inscriptions.

In what way the *vishayattār* of the eighteen *vishaya*s are involved in this grant is not clear; they appear neither to be donors nor donees. Instead, the *vishayattār* seem to assume the position of general responsibility for the final agreement to establish the new duty in support of the gift to the temples. This view is based upon references to the temples whose deities bore the name of the supra-local assemblies, thus indicating the supervisory or protective function which the assemblies exercised in relation to the temples.[14] In a classic inscription of a supra-local assembly from Tirukkoyilur (modern South Arcot), the deity, Bhumidevi, ('Goddess of the Earth, or Soil') or, 'Chittiramēḷiviṇṇagar of the eighteen lands (*bhūmi*) and seventy-nine countries (nadus)', was the beneficiary of a grant from the *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭār*:[15]

> Lord Hari. Hail! Prosperity! This is the order [*śāsanam*] of the chitra-mēla, just and good to all people, being the prosperous sons of the soil and those subsisting on cow's milk. Let this order, which is for the protection and strengthening of the sons of the land, who are born of the four castes, endure in this world. We the Chitramēḷi-Periyanāṭṭār, who are the sons of the earth goddess [*Bhumidevi*] who have studied the pure language [*centamil*] and the northern knowledge [i.e. Sanskrit knowledge], who have become adepts at heeding the laws, who are sons of the goddess of wealth whose flowers never wither, who are the lights to all quarters, who deal with sweet words in the case of the good and exorcise evil with harsh words, who prosper in this wide world bounded by the four seas, with the lord of the winds blowing gently, the lord of waters [Varuna] showering the water, the lord of the heavens illuminating all, and the people of all the quarters seated in peace (with the lands filled with coconut, jackfruit, mango groves, plantain, areca nut, sweetly scented flowers on the creepers, and the birds flocking enchantingly) increasing in numbers without waning, with justice prospering and injustice diminishing, with their fame spreading and their enemies capitulating, with their mace of authority [*ceṅgōl*] preceding them in all quarters, having the ploughshare as their god [*citramēḷi*], with golden fertility of the full purse as their goal, conducting the affairs of their organization with tolerance and sympathy, having high and true justice as the source of their towering fame, having fully learned the Muttamil mālai,[16] make this benefaction. As even previously the gate decorated with the plough

[14] See below.

[15] *S.I.I.*, v. 7, no.129; *A.R.E.*, 1900, no.117. On paleographical grounds, this inscription has been dated in the first quarter of the thirteenth century (personal communication from K.G. Krishnan, Office of the Epigraphist for India, 16 Oct. 1968).

[16] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 3, p. 1757; probably *muttamiḻ maṟai*: Kural and *bhakti* hymns.

[*mēḻi*] and the Goddess Bhūmidēvi had been installed and as such the temple of the god in Chittiramēḻiviṇṇagar of the eighteen lands [*bhūmi*] of the seventy-nine countries [*nāḍu*s] alias the Perumāḷ who is pleased to stand in Tiruviḍaikaḻi in Tirukkōvalūr [Tirukkōyilūr] in Kuṟukkai-kūṟṟam in Milāḍu alias Jananātha-vaḷanāḍu, had become the responsibility of our organization and as the endowments we had already made were lost during the calamities, we again endow a *padakku* of paddy per plough and a *kuruṇi* of paddy per person including those from outside our organization.

The opening lines of this Tirukkoyilur are in Sanskrit in contrast to the rest of the record which is in Tamil. The Sanskrit portion constitutes what Subrahmanya Aiyer has called, '. . . the characteristic feature of [the] Provincial Assembly in charge of Administration and Agriculture'.[17] While the purported delegation of administrative functions of these assemblies as seen by this learned epigraphist may be questioned, their association with agriculture is beyond challenge. The names most often taken by such supra-local bodies involved the words for 'plough' (Tamil and Kannada: *mēḻi*; Telugu: *mēḍi*), as in the title, *citramēḻi-periyanāṭṭōm* in the inscription above, or in two twelfth century northern Kannada records where the term '*mēḻi*-1000' (*mēḻi sāsirvaru*) occurs.[18] Such records also frequently display a decorative element which further supports the association with agriculture; this was an ornamental arch with the representation of a plough incised in the slab bearing the inscription.[19] The titles of the groups under whose auspices the inscriptions are prepared — *periyanāṭṭār*, *meḻi*-1000, and the assembly of the eighteen districts of the four quarters (*nāṇgu-tiśai padiṉeṇ vishayattōm*) further support the close association of the assemblies with agricultural groups, the *nattar*s, who dominated land relations.[20] In some of the inscrip-

[17] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, pp. 44-5; the verse is given in ibid, p. 70 and in *A.R.E.*, 1953-4, p. 6.

[18] *A.R.E.*, 1953-4, p. 6, provides a series of such records. Also *see* 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 46, no.2, p. 71 (text) l. 7. Further references to these organizations in Karnataka are contained in *A.R.E.*, 1958-9, nos.519, 665, 666; *A.R.E.*, 1960-1, p. 25, relating to a record of the time of Vikramaditya VI (A.D. 1076-1126).

[19] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, p. 45 and *A.R.E.*, 1953-4, p. 6. The epigraphist, T.N. Subramaniam, reports a copperplate inscription of the late thirteenth or fourteenth century dealing with the *citramēḻi* and shaped as a miniature plough (*S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 217).

[20] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, p. 47; *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 3, p. 1867 (*tiśai*).

tions, the constituent locality representatives, *nattar*, and their assemblies, *nadu*, are referred to explicitly. An inscription from Nellore, dated A.D. 1197, reads[21] as follows after the standard introductory verse:

> In the Saka year 1119, the inhabitants of [the following] nāḍus: Pedai-nāḍu, Peratti-nāḍu, Mungalaṟāttai-nāḍu, Kaḍaiyasinga-nadu, Pūṅgai-nadu, Tongai-Pūnul-nadu, Chhicaia-nadu, Pottappi-nadu of Jayankoṇḍa-chōḷamaṇḍalam having all assembled at Chittiramēḷi-maṇḍapa [pillared hall] at Tirupāṟkadaṟ-Chittiramēḷiviṇṇagar, gave to the god at Chittira-mēḷiviṇṇagar, free of tax, lands to the extent of 2,200 kuḷi.

The record from Mannargudi dated A.D. 1239 mentions land controlling groups from five *nadu*s who met as a body to settle complaints by some of their number against the demands of the Brahman *sabha* of Mannargudi (Rajadhiraja-chaturvedimanga-lam).[22] An A.D. 1234 record from Tiruppattur (Tirupidavur, in Musiri taluk, Tiruchirapalli district), refers to an assembly of twelve *nadu*s,[23] and from Varanjuram (Vriddhachalam taluk, South Arcot) an epigraph dated A.D. 1227, already noted in connection with the admission of peoples called *nāṭṭamakkaḷ* and *malaiyamakkaḷ* into the *idangai*, was issued on behalf of eleven *nadu*s.[24]

Not all grants of the *periyanattar* were to temples over which they had supervisory responsibilities. From the shrine of Sri Govinda-raja at Tirupati, there is the following Tamil record of A.D. 1235.[25]

> Hail, Prosperity! This is the edict of Bhūdēviputra-Chitramēḷa issued for the maintenance of the *dharma* observed by the four *varṇas*. As per the oral order of the king issued previously,. . . we, the *Periya-Nāṭṭa-var*, having assembled in the council-chamber (attached) to the Tiruvi-ḷaṅkōyil [situated] in Tiruchchukanūr in full numbers without omission of the necessary adjuncts, and resolved upon the representation of Śrī-saṭhakōpadāsarpiḷḷai, Kollikāvalidāsarpiḷḷai, Aruvaraiyanaiyakōyilpiḷḷai and Kalikaṟṟidāsarpiḷḷai in respect of the provision (to be made) for the *amudupaḍi* and *śāttuppaḍi* (offerings) for (the image of) Tirumaṅgaiyālvār, the bestower of blessings (on the devotees), who was installed in Srī Gōvindapperumāḷ's temple which is a plastered sanctum of Vishṇu, through the charity of the *Periya-Nāṭṭār*, have witnessed that the Tiruk

[21] A. Butterworth and V. Venugopal Chetty, *A Collection of Inscriptions on Copper-plates and Stones in the Nellore District*, Madras, 1905, v. 2, p. 824 (at Nellore town).

[22] *A.R.E.*, 1897; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.50.

[23] *I.M.P.*, v. 3, no.185, p. 1532.

[24] *A.R.E.*, 1940-1, no.184.

[25] *T.T.D.I.*, v. 1, no.40, pp. 64-6.

kuḍavūrār have granted with libations of water Kottakālvāy situated in Tirukkuḍavūr-nāḍu to . . . yielding paddy . . . and direct that (its produce) be amalgamated with and collected along with the income of Śrī Gōvindapperumāḷ by the supervisors of the treasury of the temple of Tiruvēṅkaṭamuḍaiyān and that this charity be conducted as long as the moon and the sun (last).

He, who obstructs [the conduct of] this charity, (will surrender) his body to the *Nāṭṭavar* and will beget the sin of killing a tawny (coloured) cow on the bank of the Ganges.

We, the *Periya-Nāṭṭavar* (hereby witness this transaction). This is the signature of the *Periya-Nāṭṭu-Vēḷān.*

This evidence of the continuity of the *nattar*, their assemblies, and their cooperation within supra-local assemblies of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries is significant. It is important that the latter, as new integrative institutions, did not replace the more ancient locality bodies, but rather incorporated the latter, thus achieving improved means for combinations across locality lines. As such, the supra-local assemblies of the *nattar*, now *periyanattar*, may be seen as an important further development of South Indian segmentary society. But, there was a cost borne by the older local assemblies.

The emergence of a ruling strata increasingly divorced from the locality peasantry accompanied this supra-local cooperation. This is seen in several ways. One was the differentiation of the *nattar*, now collaborating across *nadu* lines, from the ordinary peasantry; another was the close cooperation between the supra-local élite and itinerant merchant groups; finally, there appeared to be the development of a distinctive sub-culture associated with what appears as a new ruling class.

This increased status and power differentiation of those who comprised the supra-local bodies from the local peasantry is suggested by the set of inscriptions from Mannargudi. During the twenty-second regnal year of the Chola ruler Rajaraja III, A.D. 1239, a complicated, joint regulation (*vyavastha*) of the *sabha* and *mahasabha* of Rajadhiraja-chaturvedimangalam, as Mannargudi was called, and *nāṭṭāvar* of five *nadu*s of the locality was recorded.[26]

[26] *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.98, 104; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, nos.50, 58. Also *A.R.E.*, 1897, no.96; *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.48. There is the suggestion in these records, and in a few others, that in some places the two assemblies — *sabha* and *mahasabha* — may have been different bodies, the latter presumably including non-Brahmans as well as Brahmans.

It is stated that members of the locality peasantry, Vellalas, had complained that they could no longer maintain themselves since their income — cash and paddy crop — was already committed to too many purposes. Therefore, it was resolved that obligations of the Vellalas for the repair of the river bunds should be in proportion to their taxable land; that for various other obligations,[27] payments were to be based upon a strict levy per unit (*mā*) of cultivated land; and that no additional payments were to be demanded on various pretexts. It was further provided that new *kuḍumbu*s, a term which in this context may be understood as work groups,[28] should comprise only those eligible to cultivate land and that Brahmans should not interfere in the constitution of the *kuḍumbu*s or in matters involving the land taxes[29] from the hamlets of the locality. Finally, the additional demand on Vellala households of a special tax to support Brahmans (*brāhmaṇar-pērkkaḍamai*) was prohibited. The regulation concluded with the injunction that if any Brahmans or Vellalas made false allegations against other Brahmans or Vellalas of the locality, or against those in charge of the *kuḍumbu*s or in charge of the collection of taxes (*puravu*) and accounts (*ūrkaṇakkar*) to powerful people beyond

The meeting recorded in 96 of 1897 was at the temple of Sri Kailasamudaiyar which is one of the most ancient shrines at Mannargudi where one version of this inscription is found.

[27] *Tirumugan tēvai*, wages for those carrying out royal orders (?); *chennīr-veṭṭi*, cannot be identified; *neṭṭal* and *kuṟaivaruppu*, connected with dredging the river; and *makkaṭ-chevagappēru*, emoluments for village servants.

[28] This is to follow the meaning of *kuḍumbu*, groupings of families, as Subrahmanya Aiyer does in his discussion of the Uttaramērūr *mahasabha* inscriptions (*Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, ed., K.S. Vidyanathan, Coimbatore Co-Operative Printing Works, Coimbatore, 1967, pp. 273-4) where it has the same aggregative meaning as the term *kula*. This is consonant with the meaning given in the *Tamil Lexicon* (v. 2, p. 974), *kuṭumpam*, and it deviates from the meaning which Nilakanta Sastri used in his discussion of the same inscriptions in *Studies in Cōḷa History and Administration*, especially where he seems to confound the terms *kuḍumbu* and *cēri* as sections of the settlement (p. 158). The idea that the *kuḍumbu* might also have been a grouping of agricultural families for purposes of cooperation in agricultural activities is certainly suggested in this inscription where the process of periodic reconstitution can hardly be reconciled with fixed kinship units and where *kuḍumbu* membership is specifically restricted to those who cultivate land.

[29] These are enumerated as follows: *ūr-viniyōgam*, village expenditures; *kuḍumbu-kācu*, lineage (or work unit) payments; and various temple dues.

the locality (*mudalis*), they would be considered as traitors to the village and *nadu*.

The *mudalis* in this inscription can have been none other than the *nattavar* of the five *nadus* themselves, and the purpose of the regulation would appear to have been to create a better balance between Brahmans and the local peasantry with respect to divisions of local resources with some favour being shown to the latter. The injunction against carrying 'false allegations' beyond the immediate vicinity, i.e. to the *mudalis*, suggests further the interest of the supra-local assembly of the *nattavar* in having local problems disposed of by those of the immediate locality. The implication would accordingly be that efforts were made on the part of those more powerful elements of the peasant population who had attained an ascendant place over several peasant localities to separate themselves from the local peasantry. The *periyanattar* appeared not to be acting as the patrons of the local peasantry, from which they derived, but as mediators in the relations between that peasantry and the Brahman *sabha* of the vicinity who appear to have lost some of their former prestige.

A more reliable indicator of the separation of the leadership segment of the peasantry with respect to local peasants as a whole would be an increased demand from peasant production. To a degree that seems suggested in the Mannargudi records mentioned above, it might be supposed that the greater the proportion of agrarian output taken by the Brahman *sabha* of Rajadhiraja-chaturvedimangalam, the less was available to those with supra-local authority, who might, in turn, have passed some of this to temples. Thus, the effort to limit and regularize payments for strictly local purposes, including the support of local Brahmans, may be understood as a step toward freeing resources for transfer to the supra-local authority of the *nattar* for their distribution. Because revenue details are seldom ever given in the records of the period and because even such as exist are unclear,[30] it is not possible to strongly support the assertion that there was a shift in the level of payments from the prime ancient recipients of shares of locality income, such as Brahmans, to the new class of locality leaders or that the demand upon the lower peasantry actually rose in the period.

[30] *See* Appadorai's discussion, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 676-80.

One scholar, L.B. Alayev, who has given special attention to this problem, suggested that during the twelfth century in Chola country there were indications of an increased demand from holders of the *kīḻvāram*, i.e. the share of income to the peasantry proper, judging from the flight of peasants from their lands. Alayev attributes the increased demand to pressures from the growing temple institutions of the time which were, already in the twelfth century, holders of the *mēlvāram*.[31] An objection may be posed to his suggestion about the temples as a source of pressure upon the peasantry since temples themselves possessed no coercive powers. If the indications to which Alayev points are correct, they signify the exercise of enhanced power by those who constituted the supra-local bodies and who were the chief supporters of temples from this time on. A thirteenth century inscription from Srirangam would seem to support the view that substantial if not an increasing portion of peasant output was taken by supra-local chiefs during the twelfth century and later. This was a record of the Hoysala ruler Vira Somesvaradeva in about A.D. 1264[32] which provided that the locality authorities (*nāṭṭavar*) of *iḍaiyārru-nāḍu* and *kurai-parru* were to deposit in a granary (*koṭṭakāram*) 10,000 *kalam* of paddy out of the dues (*kaḍamai*) taken by them which amounted to 20,000 *kalam*.[33] This was stated to be in accordance with the proportion taken previously by the chiefs of the region, the *akalanka-nāḍāḷvar*, who were apparently displaced by the Hoysalas.[34] The demand of half of the paddy dues, *kaḍamai*, from those who managed local production suggests that the demands of the latter upon those who cultivated was high. However,

[31] Unpublished paper presented to a seminar on 'Problems of Social and Cultural Change in South India', held in Madras, 14 and 15 June 1968, under the auspices of the Madras Centre of the American Institute of Indian Studies. The paper was entitled 'Land Rights in Medieval South India as a Measure of Social Status'.

[32] *S.I.I.*, v. 4, no.435.

[33] Appadorai provides the information for converting this quantity of paddy (20,000 *kalam*) into 120,000 bushels of the grain (op. cit., v. 2, pp. 407-10).

[34] A chief with this title was one of two mentioned in an A.D. 1196 inscription in this part of Tiruchirapalli recording an agreement (*nilaimai-tīṭṭu*) to cooperate together against others (*A.R.E.*, 1908, no.483, discussed in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, pt 2, p. 693). Another inscription which refers to the ascendant position of the Hoysalas in this part of South India at the time is an A.D. 1245 one from Tirumayam, Tiruchirapalli district (K.R. Venkataraman, 'An Interesting Award', in Nagaswamy, *Seminar on Inscriptions*, pp. 3-7).

without better data on the division of shares prior to the twelfth century, it is not possible to accept Alayev's contention of an increased demand.

Another dimension along which the powerful class of supra-local authorities was separated from their peasant bases and origins may be seen in the collaboration of the *periyanattar* with trade and artisan groups. It is one of the distinctive characteristics of this transitional period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that groups which before had no separate corporative existence now enjoyed increasingly independent identification: the powerful, agricultural *cittramēḷi-periyanāṭṭār*; the itinerant, mercantile *tiśai āyirattu aiññūṟṟuvar*, or *nānādēśi*; and mobile artisans, sometimes identified by an ancient title, *rathakāra*, at other times by such terms as Kammalar.[35]

Relationships among these groups are somewhat clarified in the set of epigraphs collected by K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer for his discussion of the 'provincial organization'. Six of the nine records examined by him for the period A.D. 1168 to A.D. 1314 involved arrangements between mercantile groups and the *periyanattar*.[36] From Mannargudi, three inscriptions record provisions for the payment of a duty on areca nut and the pepper trade to temples of the place; from Piranmalai (Tiruppattur taluk, Ramnad) a wide range of trade goods became leviable to support ritual services and repairs to a temple, 'under the protection of the *vishayattār* of the eighteen *vishayas*'.[37] In these inscriptions, the supra-local authorities, called *vishayattār*, which is the equivalent of *periyanattar*, assume no liability for payments to the temples which are the recipients of the grants. The *vishayattār* seem merely to be assenting in and associating themselves with an allocation of resources which they, the supra-local authorities, would otherwise have received. Moreover, in the Mannargudi records, the mercantile groups (*nagarattār*), are local traders subject to the authority of the *vishayattār* whereas, in the Piranmalai record, the mercantile groups include those from

[35] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 203.

[36] *S.I.I.*, v. 6, no.40 (89 of 1897), 41 (90 of 1897), 47 (95 of 1897); v. 7, nos.198 (701 of 1902), 291 (21 of 1903); v. 8, no.442 (154 of 1903).

[37] This record (*S.I.I.*, v. 8, no.442 [154 of 1903]) is an extremely important one not only for an understanding of the supra-local assemblies of the period but also for its enumeration of trade goods ('Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 46, p. 17).

specific trade centres in *pāṇḍya-* and *koṅgu-maṇḍalam* who are also called *nagarattār*.[38] But, in addition, there are several groups of itinerant traders with the title, *tiśai āyirattaiññurruvar*, generally understood as itinerant traders.[39] Thus, while the Mannargudi inscriptions are those of a supra-local assembly alone registering their agreement to the arrangement involving duty to be paid by local merchants, in the Piranmalai grant there appears to be somewhat greater parity between the *vishayattār* and the mercantile groups since both seem to be issuing the grant as suggested by the terms: *citramēḷi-saśāsanam-tribhuvanāsraya-pañchaśata-vīra-śāsanam* in the opening lines of the inscription.[40]

On the whole, however, the relationship between the supra-local assembly of dominant land controllers and the mercantile bodies referred to in these records assumes the subordination of the latter to the former. In the A.D. 1235 inscription from Anbil in modern Tiruchirapalli,[41] several groups are mentioned in addition to the *citramēḷi periyanaṭṭom*. These are: itinerant merchants (*tiśaiayirattaiññūrruvar*), local merchants (*nāṭṭu chetṭigal*), other merchants (*devala-chetṭigal* and *jayapālar*), as well as artisans (*kalanai*) and soldiers (*munai* and *munai virakkoḍiyār*). These are collectively referred to by the supra-local group as 'our people' (*nam-makkaḷ*).[42]

[38] These include the *nagarattar* of several places including: Aruvimangalam alias Kulasekhara-pattinan, Eripadainallūr-vadamattai, Pudutteru alias Seranarayana-puram, Tirukottiyur-maniyambalam, Alagapuram alias Seliyanarayaṇapuram, Sundarapandiyapuram.

[39] There is disagreement among scholars on this term. They are spoken of as the '1,500' by Subrahmanya Aiyer ('Largest Provincial Organizations. . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 46, no.2, p. 73) and as '500' of the thousand districts by Nilakanta Sastri (*The Cōḷas*, p. 319); simply as 'merchants and traders in many lands', by T.N. Subramaniam (*S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 203).

[40] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . . . , *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 46, no.1, p. 8. It is noteworthy that contemporary inscriptions from Karnataka point to developments similar to those in Tamil country. A damaged record from Mudanur (Shorapur taluk, Gulbarga) recently noticed contains a resolution of a supra-local assembly (*mahānāḍu*) involving several merchant groups and the regulations they framed (*A.R.E.*, 1960-1, no.519). Another record from Gabbur in Raichur of the twelfth century refers to an organization called *mēḷi sāsiruvaru* ('1000 ploughs'), equated by the epigraphist with the *citramēḷi*, as a guild of agriculturists (ibid., no.665 of 1958-9, p. 25) dating from the time of the Kalyani Chalukya ruler Vikramaditya VI.

[41] *A.R.E.*, 1902, no.601, the text of which is found in 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .' (*Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.2, p. 74).

[42] Ibid., p. 73; reading is 'our sons'.

In the judgement of K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, the supra-local assemblies of the period were 'all powerful' with respect to other corporate groups, and though there is no reason to accept his argument that these supra-local groups were instruments of the kings and 'exercised State powers',[43] his recognition of their plenary local power must be accepted.

The Sub-Culture of the Periyanattar

Concomitant with and perhaps underlying the impressive authority of the supra-local assemblies in the economic and political management of the agrarian order was a cultural development modelled on existing Brahmanical institutions, but decidedly reflective of the self-confidence of the ruling members of these assemblies. The late twelfth and thirteenth centuries may have witnessed the eclipse of Chola authority, such as to prompt Nilakanta Sastri's observation that 'the period was marked by no striking developments in polity or society. . . .',[44] however, the emergence of powerful locality authorities, boasting of special relations with temples and seminaries (*mathas*) and the increasing importance of what were essentially new urban places must be considered as most 'striking'.

The manner in which influential, non-Brahman, agrarian groups were involved in the affairs of the sacred centres of South India during the period of the great Cholas (tenth to twelfth centuries) has been touched upon in several ways. The *nattar* played a vital role in the support of *brahmadeyas*. It was peasant-agrarian resources collected by superior locality groups and voluntarily granted to Brahmans, individually and corporately, that sustained these most significant agents of ritual and education. Royal gifts and the support of those close to the great overlords of the

[43] *See* ibid., no.4, 284-5. Here Subrahmanya Aiyer attributes neglect of these bodies to their confusion as primarily religious in character: 'The reason for the non-recognition of this all powerful body [the *periyanāṭṭār*] which wielded the greatest influence in the land is due to the mistaken notion that the word *samaya* or *samaya-dharma* meant the *dharmas* of the community in all religions.' *Samaya-dharma* is regarded by him as the same as *vyavastha*: 'regulations' or 'recorded transactions' which are equivalent to *rāja dharma* to be obeyed as if they were the orders of the king (ibid., p. 281).

[44] *History of South India*, p. 202. He goes on to state that industry, trade, and the arts continued to flourish.

Coromandel plain were of importance principally in the magnificent Brihadisvara temple at Tanjavur, the temple, at Gaṅgaikondachola-puram, and in a few other places. These were as much monuments to the power of their Chola builders as marks of their piety. Direct 'royal' grants were few, relative to the overall pattern of support to Brahman institutions, though such royal gifts must be considered as models for the overwhelming support by local dominant groups to such institutions. To both the local and great overlords, such support brought honour and fortified legitimation in addition to serving the motive of piety. The sustaining support for all but the few institutions which enjoyed direct royal favour came from the spokesmen and leaders of the peasantry of the region.

To what extent these supporters of Brahmanical institutions of learning and ritual were direct beneficiaries of these institutions is, however, questionable. Too little is known about the modes of temple worship from the tenth to the twelfth centuries to assess the degree of non-Brahman ritual participation. The probability is that there was little direct participation. Certain kinds of knowledge related to ritual were transmitted within the context of the Brahman family or, for higher forms of such knowledge, in a relationship with a guru or *acharya*. The place of guru as transmitter of high sacred knowledge became increasingly important during later Chola times as differences between Saivite and Vaishnavite doctrine became firmer,[45] and as these led to religious orders, 'sects' (Tamil: *campiratāyam*, from the Sanskrit *saṁpradāya*). 'Sectarian' education conducted in a seminary (*matha* or *ghaṭika*) provided the comprehensive studies judged necessary for the maintenance of Brahmanical traditions of the age. Here, careful screening of students served to exclude all but Brahmans with appropriate genealogical and sastric credentials. The most complete educational facilities were the *ghatika*s of Kanchi, Tiruvadutturai, Tiruvorriyur, Ennayiram, and Tribhuvani where curricula extended beyond sacred knowledge *per se* to include medicine, poetics, and other arts. Inscriptions from these places provide an impression of heavy Brahman control. Most teachers were Brahmans, the language of instruction was Sanskrit, and most of the stipendary students were Brahmans.

[45] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, pp. 61-5; Farquhar, *Outline of Religious Literature*, p. 257.

Exclusion from these educational contexts to which Brahmans controlled access does not mean that Sanskrit and the sacred and sastric lore in that language could not be obtained by non-Brahmans. Some of the great figures of the age who were not Brahmans commanded Sanskrit and at least a part of its knowledge. The thirteenth century formulator of Saiva Siddhanta, Meykandar, is recalled as a pious Vellala who translated twelve Sanskrit sutras of the *raurava-āgama* into Tamil.[46] Indeed, the classification of *sātvik-sudra* applied to Vellalas in medieval South India, if it means anything, means that some of them were deemed worthy of some Brahmanical education.

The general character of non-Brahman culture in South India, its pretentions to ritual purity, was based precisely upon such Brahman norms and knowledge[47] as noticed in the Tirukkoyilur inscription quoted above. How non-Brahmans acquired Brahmanical learning is obscured by the dominance of Brahmans over the most important cultural institutions of which we have record. However, there is a suggestion that the term *kaṇimurrūṭṭu* may refer to support of higher forms of non-Brahman learning during the tenth to twelfth centuries. This term appears in Chola copper-plate grants to indicate a right to income from land enjoyed by persons outside of the *brahmadeyas*; other rights of a similar sort were those of *dēvadāna*, *paḷḷiccandan*, and *veṭṭipēru* with which the *kaṇimurrūṭṭu* right is usually included. The other terms relate to income rights of persons attached to Hindu temples, Jaina shrines, and those who clear forest tracts around settled areas and possibly engage in other public works.[48] *Kaṇimurrūṭṭu* was explained by K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer as an income right to those called *kaḍigaiyār*, sometimes identified as announcers of the time,[49] but more plausibly as court poets.[50] Recently, a learned epi-

[46] Ibid., p. 94 and Farquhar, *Outline of Religious Literature*, p. 257.

[47] In the recent past, the ideological writings of leaders of the non-Brahman movement in Tamil country argue that alleged Brahman norms are really ancient Vellala ones adopted by Brahmans and used against the Vellalas. *See* Swami Vedachalam, *Vēḷāḷar Nāgarigam* [*The Civilization of Ancient Velalas*], T.M. Press, Pallavaram, 1927.

[48] 'Larger Leiden Plates of Rājarāja I', *E.I.*, v. 22, pp. 213ff; 'Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rājēndra I', *E.I.*, v. 3, p. 383ff; *S.I.T.I.*, '*Glossary*'; and *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3296, *murrūṭṭu*.

[49] *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 231.

[50] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 2, p. 668.

graphist, K.G. Krishnan, has suggested that *kaṇimurrūṭṭu* may refer to payments to the learned (perhaps poets?) who were not Brahmans and who were thus excluded from participation and benefits from *brahmadeya*s, *ghatika*s, and *vidyasthāna*s.[51] The evidence of achievements by non-Brahmans in Sanskrit and higher forms of knowledge prior to the late twelfth century and the high probability that non-Brahmans were substantially excluded from other sources of support, strongly favour Krishnan's suggestion.

Beyond limited access to the sacred knowledge of Brahmanically oriented institutions, non-Brahmans would presumably also have had been denied access to many ritual performances involving Brahman functionaries. For one reason, the shrines of canonical deities during the early Chola period and most of the period of the great Cholas were located in the residential quarters of Brahman villages, thus non-Brahmans would have suffered restrictions of movement into these quarters. It would also appear to have been the case that from the ninth century, most shrines of Brahmanical gods were simple, even austere, reflecting the aniconic propensities of the Smartha tradition of the age. This is said to have been a reversal of the trend to greater iconic worship before A.D. 800 and thus may reflect a deliberate effort to exclude all but the sastric-oriented Sivabrahmans.[52] The remains of early Chola temples, stripped of their later elaborate additions — minor shrines, great walls providing impressive ambulatory corridors (*prakāra*), great gate-ways (*gōpura*) — consist of small shelters for a *lingam*. Here, during most of the Chola period, the most elaborate ritual would have consisted of lamp offerings and recitations of Sanskrit mantras and, increasingly, Tamil hymns in praise of Siva.[53] Given the rules of purity governing sacred places and the modest scale of ritual

[51] Personal communication from K.G. Krishnan, Office of the Epigraphist for India.

[52] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 111. K.R. Srinivasan (superintendent of the Department of Archaeology, southern circle [Madras], Government of India), has suggested that a transition from iconic to aniconic forms occurred around A.D. 800, the *sivalinga* replacing iconic forms: '. . . a reversal of what had obtained earlier and what has been persisting in lower sub-strata of society throughout' (*Some Aspects of Religion as Revealed by Early Monuments and Literature in South India*, University of Madras, Madras, 1960, p. 62).

[53] This dates from the late Pallava period according to Nilakanta Sastri (*Development of Religion in South India*, pp. 120-1).

performances, the scope for non-Brahman ritual participation would have been small. It was only with *bhakti* ritual in its more elaborate and popular form based upon the inclusion of folk elements of iconic worship of the twelfth century and after — a development associated with the development of Vaishnavism after Ramanuja — that the non-Brahman place in Brahmanical temple activities became significant. These developments form an important episode in South Indian religion.

Direct involvement of the dominant landed folk of the Coromandel plain and portions of the contiguous upland with Brahmanical (Vedic) temples became greater during the twelfth century and later. Considerable significance must be attributed to reforms in Vaishnava temples of this period with which the name of Ramanuja has persistently been linked. According to the chronicle (*sthalapurāṇa*) of the Srirangam temple at Tiruchirapalli, *Koil Olugu*, the great Vaishnava *acharya* spent an extended period at the temple, succeeding the Vaishnava teacher Alavandar as superintendent.[54] Among the ten divisions of temple functionaries established by Ramanuja was one consisting of Sudras called *sāttāda* Vaishnavas, a term which means Vaishnavas without 'threads', or Vellalas.[55] The roles which such non-Brahmans carried out were those of storehouse managers, guards, accountants, as well as some ritual posts including the offering of coconuts to the deity, Ranganatha.[56] It appears that the position of the non-Brahman functionaries at Srirangam was not to endure beyond the late fourteenth century when, along with non-Brahman functionaries at the other important Vaishnava shrine at Tirupati, they were replaced in their duties by Brahmans or by ascetic orders comprising Brahmans and non-Brahmans.[57]

However, at lesser Vaishnava shrines, and probably at most temples of the time, non-Brahman leaders were most consistently

[54] *Kōil Oḷugu, The Chronicle of the Srirangam Temple with Historical Notes*, ed. V.N. Hari Rao, Rochouse and Sons, Madras, 1961, p. 41ff. Also *see* Hari Rao's doctoral thesis, 'A History of Trichinopoly and Srirangam', University of Madras, Madras, 1945, consulted at the University of Chicago Library.

[55] Ibid., p. 90.

[56] Ibid., p. 94.

[57] Burton Stein, 'Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Sects' *in* J. Silverberg (ed.), *Social Mobility in the Caste System of India*, Mouton, The Hague, 1968, pp. 78-95. There are suggestions of Brahman opposition to some of the reforms involving Sudras in the time of Ramanuja (Hari Rao, *Koil Olugu*, . . .).

influential. Numerous records of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries refer to *citramēḷi-viṇṇagar* temples, that is Vaishnava shrines under the protection of the *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭār*. The ancient shrine of Trivikrama Perumal in Tirukkoyilur (South Arcot), also called *tiruviḍai-kaḷi-nāyaṇār*, celebrated by the early hymnists (*āḻvārs*), was under the protection of a supra-local assembly according to an early thirteenth century inscription.[58] A portion of this record reads:

> To the temple of Elupattoṉbadu-nāṭṭu-padinen-bhumi-cittramēḷi-viṇṇagar [the Vishnu deity of the supra-local assembly of the 79 countries and 18 districts] alias Tiruviḍaikaḷi-niṉṟaruliya-perumāl at Tirukōvalūr in Kuṟukkai-kūṟṟam of Malāḍu alias [its Chola territorial designation] Jananātha-vaḷanāḍu, which has received the [symbol of the] plough [*mēḷi tōraṇam*] and has been left under our protection [and] bhūmideva [the earth god] having been consecrated by us, we made the following endowment: as the gifts made by us to this temple in former years had been lost along with the edicts relating to them during invasions, we have now ordered that one *padakku* of paddy on each plough and one *kuruṇi* of paddy per individual shall be paid as had been formerly decreed by us.[59]

In modern Nellore town (Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh) a Vishnu deity was granted income from 2,200 *kuḻi* of land (about 7 acres)[60] in A.D. 1197 by a supra-local assembly meeting in the pillared hall of the temple (*maṇḍapam*) called the *citramēḷi-mandapam*. Introducing this record is the standard invocation of the *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭar*, followed by:

> In the Saka year 1119, the inhabitants of the nāḍus [eight are enumerated] of Jayankondacholoa-mandalam, having all assembled at the chittramēḷi-maṇḍapa at Tirupāṟkadaṟ-chittiramēḷi-viṇṇagar, gave to the god. . . free of tax, lands to the extent of 2,200 kuḻi.

In the important *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭār* inscription from Piranmalai (Tiruppattur taluk, Ramnad), already discussed in part, it is stated:

> . . . the sacred temple of Margavagaittirta-mudaliyar-nayaṉār-udaiyar . . . at the foot of Tirukkoḍunkoṉram hill in Tirumalai-nāḍu, with its sacred tank, matha and Tirumadaiviḷāgam had been left under the protection of (assembly of the) Eighteen Districts (padiṉeṇ-viṣhaya). . . .[61]

[58] *A.R.E.*, 1922, para. 8, pp. 8-9.

[59] *A.R.E.*, 1900, no.117, text and translation in 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.2, pp. 70ff.

[60] *Nellore Inscriptions*, op. cit., v. 2, p. 824. The conversion of *kuḻi* follows Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, 262n, 406.

[61] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.4, pp. 270 ff. *I.M.P.*,

In A.D. 1217 an inscription registered a gift to the temple Tirumerkoyil-*citramēḻi-viṇṇagarāḻvār* at Vijayamangalam (Erode taluk, Coimbatore) said to be under the protection of the left division of castes (*idangai*).[62] Another similar record from Paruthipalli (Salem taluk, Salem) refers to a temple as *citramēḻi-viṇṇagaram* and to endowments of the *citramēḻināṭṭār*.[63] Other places whose Vishnu temples and *mathas* were under the protection of the supra-local assembly and accordingly called *citramēḻi-viṇṇagaram* were at Valarpuram,[64] Sendamangalam,[65] and Anbil.[66]

The reform impulse in contemporary Saivism also involved participation by non-Brahmans. Saiva Siddhanta philosophy with its intense monotheism and devotional emphasis was transformed into a popular sect during the thirteenth century. Its famous early teachers, using Tamil as the vehicle for their teaching, included two Vellalas and two Brahmans. Meykandar, the first of the Tamil expounders of Siddhanta and a Vellala, translated twelve Sanskrit works into the Tamil *Siva-jnana-bodham*.[67] His disciple was a Brahman, Arulnandi. Marai, the next great teacher of the sect, was a Vellala;[68] his disciple Umapathi, at the end of the thirteenth century, was perhaps the most accomplished theologian and is alleged to have suffered excommunication from his Brahman community at Chidambaram for his association with Vellalas.[69] Other reforms in Saiva worship as this involved active non-Brahman participation were the Vira-Saiva movement in Karnataka and the sect led by Aradhya Brahmans in parts of medieval Andhra which maintained close relations with the Vira-Saivas.[70] Appro-

v. 2, p. 1122, nos. 534, 535, 539, 543, 544, are other examples of these assemblies of the thirteenth century. The quotation is from *A.R.E.*, 1903, no.154; S.I.I., v. 8, no.442.

[62] *A.R.E.*, 1905, no.564; *I.M.P.*, v. 1, p. 540. This record refers in an unusual way to the 'ninety-nine' of the left hand.

[63] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 289, citing *E.C.*, v. 4, Hg 17, v. 7, Sk 118.

[64] *A.R.E.*, 1911, no.28.

[65] *Pudukkottai State Inscriptions*, no.171, p. 100.

[66] *A.R.E.*, 1900, no.22.

[67] Violet Paranjoti, *Saiva Siddhanta in the Meykandar Sastra*, London, 1938; Luzac contains a list of important works on the sect, (p. 9).

[68] K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 'Dravidian Language and Literature; Saiva Siddhanta Literature', *in* R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *History and Culture of the Indian People*, v. 5, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1966, p. 366.

[69] Farquhar, *Outlines of Religious Literature*, p. 257. Also, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *'Development of Religion . . .'*, p. 94.

[70] Ibid., pp. 64-5.

priate to the intellectual thrust of these developments, seminaries (*mathas*) played an important role, and within these institutions Saivite, non-Brahman agriculturists were conspicuous. Many Saivite *mathas* were under the control of non-Brahman gurus or *mathapatis* during the thirteenth century. As centres of Saiva Siddhanta, these *mathas* were the institutionalized aspect of the major role taken by the sect's Vellala progenitors. A study of Saivite institutions to the fourteenth century by M. Rajamanickam attributes central significance to these seminary institutions.[71]

Saiva *mathas* involving non-Brahman participation and leadership arose in the first half of the thirteenth century.[72] Among the most important of these were: the Tirunana-sambandham *matha* at Tiruchchattimurram (Rajarajapuram in Tanjavur) with branches in several places;[73] the Maligai-matha at Tiruvidaimarudur also in Tanjavur with branches as distant as Chidambaram (Tillai);[74] the Senbaikkudi *matha*; the Acharamalagiyan-matha at Tiruvarur in Ramnad;[75] the Tiruttondaitogaiyan-matha at Govindaputtur;[76] the Siruttondan-matha at Sengattan-gudi (Tiruchchengattangudi), Tanjavur;[77] the Tirutturaiyur-matha in South Arcot; the Tiruvadutturai-matha in Tanjavur;[78] the Dharmapuram *matha* in Mayavaram taluk, Tanjavur.[79] These seminaries and their branches were under the control and supervision of non-Brahman teachers, *sivayogins* or *mahēśvaras*, and the *mathas* themselves were often named for the non-Brahman Saivite saint (*nāyaṉār*) Tirunavukkarasar. Seminaries with the latter designation existed at Tiruvilimilalai in Tanjavur and Tiruppalatturai in Tiruchchirapalli.[80] Headships of the respective *matha* organizations constituted a line called a *santāna* and usually bore the title *mudaliyār*, presumably

[71] M.Rajamanickam, *The Development of Saivism in South India (A.D. 300-1300)*, Dharmapuram Adhinam, Dharmapuram, 1964.

[72] Ibid., p. 379; there is a major discussion of these institutions in *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53, pp. 103-5.

[73] Anaikka, *A.R.E.*, 1908, no.586; Usattanam, ibid., no.218; Vilimilalai, ibid., no.392; Valivalam, *A.R.E.*, 1911, nos. 108, 109.

[74] Rajamanickam, op. cit., p. 232.

[75] Ibid., pp. 233-4; *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53.

[76] *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

to distinguish them from Brahman *matha* leaders.[81] Still another distinctive designation, which occurs in the case of the *matha* at Tiruvanaikkaval, in Tiruchirapalli, a branch of the Tiruchchatti-murrattu *matha* at Rajarajapuram in Tanjavur, is *nārpatteṇṇāyiravan-maṭha*, or the '48,000' *matha*.[82] The '48,000' designation, as already noted, is one of those applied to Vellalas of Tondai-mandalam.

There are some indications that the flourishing non-Brahman *mathas* were opposed by Brahmans. In one case, that of the '48,000' *matha* at Tiruvanaikkaval, the institution appears to have been taken over by Brahmans who changed its name to the Samkaracharyaswami-matha.[83] In another case, a *matha* or *guhai* established for non-Brahman ascetics at Tirutturaipundi in Tanjavur was the scene of some disturbances (*kalagam*) in the year A.D. 1200 and resulted in the appointment of a Brahman teacher.[84] Such attempts by Brahmans to overturn the control of non-Brahman leaders at these centres of learning were not, in the main, successful. As Rajamanickam pointed out in discussing the disturbances at Tirutturaipundi in A.D. 1200: '. . . in the time of Rajaraja III and subsequently . . . [non-Brahman *guhais*] flourished under the patronage of ruling chiefs and private individuals.'[85]

An important, yet barely noticed, development in temple worship during this period when non-Brahmans began to have an influential place was the full emergence of goddess — *Amman* or *Devi* — worship. From the thirteenth century, temples were constructed to include a shrine for a female deity whose identity was linked to the major deity of the temple; moreover, these shrines were added to many of the temples which had been constructed before that time.[86] The significance of this development is that it represented an assimilation of folk conceptions of deity.

[81] Rajamanickam, op. cit., p. 231.

[82] *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53, regarding nos.585, 586. K.V. Venkataraman associated the '48,000' group of Saiva Siddhanta teachers with a line (*santanam*) called *gōlaki* or *lakshadhyayi* as well as *nārpatteṇ-ṇāyirattanār*, or 'the 48,000'; 'An Interesting Award', op. cit., p. 4.

[83] *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53.

[84] *A.R.E.*, 1912, no.471, discussed by Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, v. 2, pt 2, p. 722. Also *see* Rajamaniċkam, op. cit., pp. 239-41; *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 2, p. 775 (*kalakkam*).

[85] Rajamanickam, op. cit., p. 241.

[86] K.R. Srinivasan, 'Tirukamakottam', op. cit., p. 53; also his 'Aspects of Re-

The female deity, then as now the major focus of village, clan, and locality devotion — in part as protectress, in part as fertility deity — attained a central place in Vedic temple worship. Generally called *tirukāmakōṭṭam*, the *amman* shrine within the Siva temple complex became a full-blown architectural element during the thirteenth century after a long, slow evolution beginning in about the eighth century. According to *āgama* texts and inscriptional evidence of that early time, goddess images were at times installed in existing Vedic shrines.[87] Among the most important of these early female deities were Durga, the 'Seven Mothers' (*sapta-matrikas*), and the somewhat fearsome sister of the benign Lakshmi, Jyeshtha. Durga is mentioned in one of the two principal Vishnu-oriented *vaikhānasāgamas*, and among the iconographic attributes of this goddess were the conch and discus of Vishnu.[88] In the period after the eleventh century, and particularly from the thirteenth century, temples of both Siva and Vishnu deities came to include a shrine for a goddess appropriately named for her association with the principal male deity, e.g. Brihadesvara and the goddess Brihannayaki, Peruvudaiyar and Periyanayaki in Tanjavur, Ranganatha and Ranganayaki at Srirangam, Sundaresvara and Minakshi at Madurai, Ekamresvara and Kamakshi at Kanchi.[89] Within the Vaishnava tradition, the more conservative *vaikhānasa* ritual form gave way to that of the *pāñcarātra*, following the reform activities of Ramanuja, and shrines for Vaishnava consorts (*nācciyar*) became important.[90] The female hymnist (*āḻvār*), Andal and the goddess Lakshmi were among the important deities in such shrines. The major shrine of Andal (also called *kodai* and *śudikkodutta nācciyār*) at Srivilliputtur in Ramnad is one of the most famous of *Devi* shrines among Vaishnavas; it was constructed in about A.D. 1160.[91] Other Vaishnava *nachchiyar* which strikingly bear out this

ligion Revealed by Early Monuments . . .', op. cit., p. 22 for agamic evidence. Inscriptional evidence is found, curiously, in Jaina inscriptions of the eighth century in which the imprecation includes a reference to those who destroy *kāmakōṭṭams* (discussed in M.D. Sampath 'Jaina Inscriptions of Sattamangalam', *in* Nagaswamy, *Seminar on Inscriptions*, p. 158).

[87] Srinivasan, *Aspects of Religion Revealed by Early Monuments*, p. 22.

[88] Ibid., p. 30.

[89] Ibid., pp. 32-3.

[90] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, '*Development of Religion . . .*', p. 67; Farquhar, '*Outlines of Religious Literature . . .*', p. 244.

[91] Another date suggested for the installation of this deity is A.D. 973 by the

argument of folk cult assimilation are: the Chenchu Nachchiyar at the Ahobilam Narasimhaswami temple, the Malayalam Nachchiyar at Kanchi, and the Uraiyur Valli Nachchiyar at Srirangam.[92] The attainment of the status of major deity by goddesses, especially those with ancient tribal cult associations, even though subordinate to Vedic male deities, was one of the clearest signs of religious changes in the thirteenth century and marked the deepened connection between the peasant culture and high culture of the age.

Religious changes from the late twelfth century strongly suggest the efflorescence of a significant cultural variant not before visible in medieval South India. It is impossible to separate this cultural development from the leaders of peasant society in the macro region, for in all cases they are not only intimately involved in the changes, but they were its promoters. Individuals such as Meykandar and Marai within the Saiva Siddhanta movement and the numerous *santāna-mudaliyār*s were Vellalas; the offices reserved for non-Brahmans within the leading Vaishnava shrine at Srirangam and Tirupati were occupied by Vellalas; temples, *matha*s, and even Brahman settlements during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries came under the protection of the supra-local assemblies composed of Vellala *nattar*s of the *citramēli-periyanāṭṭār*.[93] The emergence of *Devi* shrines in both Vaishnava and Saivite temples is further evidence of this transformation.

Considering the significant association of leading peasant groups with Brahmans from the pre-Pallavan period, considering too that peasant support of Brahmanical ritual and learning was entirely voluntary during the mature era of the Pallavas as well as during the period of the great Cholas, it would be incorrect to speak of the developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as new. They, of course, were not. In an essential way, these later developments may certainly be understood as the evolution of devotional forms of religion in which the assimilation of folk elements was present from the beginning in the hymns of the

author T.K. Viraraghavacharya ('The Srivilliputtur Temple of Sudikkodutta Nachchiyar', *Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam Bulletin*, v. 6, no.4, pp. 1-3).

[92] Ibid., v. 6, no.5, pp. 5-6. Also discussed by V. Raghavan, 'Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture', *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 15, no.4 (1956), p. 500.

[93] K.R. Venkatarama Ayyar, 'Medieval Trade, Craft and Merchant Guilds in South India', *J.I.H.*, v. 25 (1947), pp. 274-6.

*āḻvār*s and *nāyaṉār*s. It is further to be recognized that the folk-devotional variant in South Indian Hinduism had always had a reflective aspect maintained by learned non-Brahmans, proficient in Sanskrit and informed by sastric knowledge which was transmitted in Sanskrit. If the interpretation of the term *kaṇimurrūṭṭu* as a form of agrarian income meant to provide support to non-Brahman savants is correct, it would appear that the maintenance of such learning was considered appropriate by Brahmans and local chiefs as well as great Chola overlords.

However, even if this term is incorrectly interpreted, it is obvious that this highest learning by non-Brahmans was supported in some manner and that learned non-Brahmans, along with the ritual functionaries involved with non-Vedic deities and Tamil *siddhārāchāryas* (Tamil: *cittar*) who were yogic, medical practitioners,[94] enjoyed consistent patronage. Here, as in many other aspects of peasant life, it must be recognized that such activities need not have become a part of the extant inscriptional record since it fell outside the Brahman-centred culture, the records of which were engraved on the surfaces of thousands of Vedic shrines. Support by the peasantry of non-Brahman, non-Vedic ritual and learning was obviously well-established and did not require the special notice that transfers of resources to Brahmans did. It is not possible to understand the careers of numerous non-Brahmans in the Siddhanta movement and in Vira Saivism without supposing an ancient and established tradition of erudition, in Sanskrit as well as other South Indian languages, among non-Brahmans. The conspicuous participation of non-Brahmans in the most important religious and learned activities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries does not, therefore, reflect new competences so much as new opportunities for using quite ancient ones.[95] Further,

[94] In these traditions from about the tenth to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, non-Brahman teachers condemned idolatry and taught an intense monotheistic faith (Nilakanta Sastri, '*Development of Religion* . . .', p. 95, and the forthcoming essay of N. Subrahmaniam, provisionally entitled 'Brahmans in South India', by the University of Madras based upon lectures at the University of Madras in 1967. Also, Zvelebil, *Smile of Murugan*, ch. 14).

[95] One notes the contemporary literary figure Kamban, who was a non-Brahman *uvallan*, a caste of temple drummers and priests of Kali shrines and the poet Kuttan who was a weaver (Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, pp. 359-60 and *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 1, p. 462). Kamban's patron was also a non-Brahman named Sadaiyappa Vellala (C.P. Venkatarama Aiyar, *Kamban and His Art*, Madras, 1913, p. 107).

the manifest weakness of the Chola overlordship would preclude even the most enthusiastic modern scholarly proponents of the view of bureaucratic kingship in medieval South India from attributing this support to the Chola rulers.[96] On the contrary, this development registers the power and self-confidence of a rural class which was progressively detaching itself from its peasant base and establishing deep relationships with the growing urban segment of South Indian society and culture.

The Urban Milieu of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries

'Town life' and its relationship to the society and culture of the countryside continues to be a vexing problem for South Asian social scientists. Accustomed to the convenient, and on the whole valid, dichotomization of many contemporary and historical societies and cultures into 'urban' and 'rural' spheres, social scientists working in South Asia have often encountered serious problems in the application of these concepts to South Asian evidence. This is perhaps more true for historians than others, and historians of the medieval period have been very heavily dependent for information about towns and town life upon the reports of those with questionable knowledge of India, foreigners, beginning with Chinese Buddhist pilgrims and ending with European traders. Such places as Kanchi, which from Pallava times at least, was an important pilgrimage centre and *locus* of regional sect and social life, and Tanjavur, which during the period of the great Cholas appears to have been a major regional centre of pilgrimage, trade, and administration, are but rarely seen. And, there were few places with the stature of these in medieval South India.

Of course, the extent to which it is possible to be informed about medieval society and culture from conditions of the present is limited and hazardous. Certainly, however, administrative and market functions of urban places during more recent times cannot

[96] The opposite relationship — that of kings dependent upon peasant groups — is suggested in K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and T.N. Subramaniam ('Hemavati Pillar Inscription of Kulottunga Chola III, Year 2', *E.I.*, v. 31, no.37, pp. 274-5). Here it is stated that the *periyanāṭṭavar* 'paved the way for the ultimate success of Kulōttunga in getting the Chōḷa throne'. This conjecture is deprecated by the *E.I.* ed., D.C. Sircar.

be assumed for an earlier period when neither the modern bureaucratized political system nor the modern international economy impinged upon the peasant agrarian context. It may be proposed that there were no fundamental differences among settlements in medieval India, South and North, such as to permit the delineation of 'urban places' of however primitive a character.[97] Terms such as *nagaram, puram, paṭṭiṇam* may be seen to be attached to certain settlements in recognition of their market functions and possibly their somewhat more diverse (though not necessarily greater) populations. However, such settlements may be seen as but minor variations within the complex structure of essentially rural localities in South India before A.D. 1100. In most settlements of that time, peasants, merchants and artisans along with others lived in close association, sharing not only interdependent economic relationships, but also a common involvement in the cultural life of the locality. It is thus difficult to assume that settlements designated variously as *nagaram*, *puram*, or *paṭṭiṇam* — and usually taken to mean towns or cities by many modern researchers — were 'centres' in the sense of being qualitatively different from most other large settlements of a locality of the macro region.

[97] It has been argued recently that the Indian 'urban place' is not discontinuous with its rural surroundings and that the 'urban–rural' dichotomy is inappropriate in India. David F. Pocock has presented this issue most cogently. Speaking of current sociological research in the Indian cultural sphere, Pocock states:

> Where it is recognized the city and village are elements of the same civilization, how does the question of their continuity arise? Is it not because the sociologist has assumed (almost unconsciously) a division which his later observations would lead him to mend? If we have posited the village from the outset we have automatically opposed it in our minds to the city. When we come to knit up what we have broken we can only do it by way of a description between the two entities . . . That the problem is a false one becomes clear when, moving to the level of relations, the dichotomy disappears.

'Sociologies: Urban and Rural', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, v. 4 (April 1960), p. 81. An application of Pocock's distinction is made by Owen M. Lynch ('Rural Cities in India: Continuities and Discontinuities', *India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity*, ed. P. Mason, O.U.P., London, 1967, pp. 142-58). Involved in this discussion is another dimension which may be viewed as methodological, or perhaps epistemological, in which the central question is the condition under which any 'pre-established concepts' from one cultural context can be applied to another. *See* F.G. Bailey, 'For a Sociology of India?' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, v. 3., pp. 80-101 and the editorial rejoinder (Pocock and L. Dumont) in ibid., v. 4, pp. 82ff.

It cannot even be said of such places that ties of trade and exchange predominated over those involving the land and its management.

However, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there were a few settlements which did exhibit more clearly the characteristics of an urban place in most modern usage. Here were found a greater array of specialists than were to be found in most large, essentially agricultural settlements — that is, a significant difference in degree. Another urban characteristic which would be encountered in some places was a major, regional temple (with its constellation of ancillary institutions such as seminaries, choultries) and a major regional market, i.e. a difference of a qualitative kind.

Settlements which differed qualitatively from even the most populous agrarian settlements in the greater diversity of the resident groups, might have included many of the older *brahmadeya*s, those dating from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. As settlements with a substantial population of Brahman teachers and ritual specialists, a wider array of service groups were to be expected and appear to have been present according to the *brahmadeya* records of that earlier period when such settlements were the most pluralistic of any. Though there was a decline in the establishment of new *brahmadeya*s after the time of Kulottunga I and though the formerly substantial self-government appears also to have diminished, these large, pluralistic settlements do not appear to have changed rapidly. Some seem to have reverted to peasant-managed settlements, others were placed under the management of temple authorities as *devadana* villages; in still other cases these Brahman settlements became the cores of larger and more diverse settlements in which different kinds of sacral functions displaced those of the earlier Brahman settlement and in which market functions — always an aspect of the largest *brahmadeya*s — became even more important.[98]

Thus it was that while many, perhaps most, Brahman settlements of the earlier age continued for some time to exist as important

[98] This appears to have happened in the case of the *brahmadeya* Tirukkudamukkil, by which name Kumbakonam town was referred until about A.D. 1018 (T.V. Mahalingam, 'The Nāgēśvarasvāmi Temple', *J.I.H.*, pt 1 (April 1967), pp. 73-4). In a general way, this point is even more strongly presented in the summary tables prepared by Sathianathaier (*Studies in the Ancient History of Tondamandalam*, app. 'B', pp. 64ff).

places within a locality and to maintain an impressive array of religious specialists, the significance of these settlements appeared to have diminished in relation to other large and diverse settlements during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The latter may be called 'towns' in the sense of being sociologically distinctive from, if not discontinuous with, the countryside and in the sense that these settlements were the *loci* of functions previously dispersed over the locality. These centres tended increasingly to become the dominant political, ritual, and trade places in the enlarged localities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; they constituted a new tier of settlements that contributed to the integration of the *periyanadu*.

The Vedic temple of the later Chola period is the marker of the urbanization of the age. Where before the *brahmadeya* village had been a major repository of lithic records, the site of the great temples provides a major source of records of the twelfth century and later.[99] Temples of this age were undergoing basic architectural changes which have long been recognized by art historians. Accordingly, the census officer in charge of the census temple survey of 1961 divided Chola temples into those of the early period (A.D. 900-85), the middle period (A.D. 985-1070), and the later period (A.D. 1070-1250) after which time there was a general mergence of the Chola style temple with what has been called the 'Pandyan style'.[100] Architectural developments of the late eleventh century

[99] The reliability of this assertion is not high, nor will such propositions be until tens of thousands of inscriptions are organized better than they are. However, if one takes the lists of records for two Chola reigns of approximately equal duration and with about the same number of extant records, the diminished role of the *brahmadeya* is clear. Thus, using the list of records in Nilakanta Sastri's *The Cōḷas*, v. 1 and v. 2, pt 2, for Rajendra I (A.D. 1012-45) in v. 1, pp. 530-71, involving 221 inscriptions, and Rajaraja III (A.D. 1216-56) in the latter place, pp. 721-60, involving 284 inscriptions, it was found that in the earlier reign 79 inscriptions (36%) recorded the affairs of the *brahmadeya* settlements and in the latter reign 40 inscriptions (14%) involved the affairs of these settlements. An analysis of the qualitative aspects of the records from these two reigns makes this impression much stronger.

[100] Government of India, *Census of India, 1961*, v. 9, 'Madras', pt 11–D, 'Temples of Madras State; Chingleput District and Madras City', comp. by P.K. Nambiar and N. Krishnamurthy (1965), p. 7. Also, S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Art*, pt 1, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966, espec. pp. 253ff for his discussion of periods of early temple styles and James C. Harle, *Temple Gateways in South India; the Architecture and Iconography of the Cidambaram Gopuras*, Bruno Cassirer, Oxford, 1963, pp. xii-xiii.

and after include generally larger and more complex structures than known before. Ornately carved pillared halls (*maṇḍapam*) are characteristic of this period; long stairways to the sanctorum of shrines set on hills was another; tall gateways (*gōpuram*) which became the massive and distinctive element of the Vijayanagara period made their regular appearance; and, as already mentioned, the erection of separate shrines for *Amman* or *Devi* worship were parts of the new temples constructed in this period and were added to existing temples in many cases.[101]

These temple centres, on the side of whose buildings and walls most of the records of this later period and the following period are to be found, were dependent upon a large and varied population in order to function. Important temple centres had always been so in India. This is noted by the historian of *Dharmaśāstra*, P.V. Kane, who pointed to an ancient recognition that a village, even a large one, was distinguished from a 'town' (*nagaram*) on the basis that in the latter only, all castes were to be found;[102] another scholar, commenting on early South India, stated similarly:

> The difference between a village and a town (*Nagara*) was generally that the latter had a temple of high reputation. Attached to it were the priests versed in the Agamas, Brahmins learned in the Vedas, musicians and others. The aggregation of a large population due to the shrine or due to the protection afforded by the fort or temple walls gave an industrial bias to town life. . . .[103]

To these general characterizations of the temple centre may be added K.A. Nilakanta Sastri's reference to Chola temples:

> . . . Every temple, great or small, held in relation to its neighbourhood exactly the same position that the Great Temple [Brihadisvara temple at Tanjavur] had in the capital. The difference was only one of degree. As landholder, employer, and consumer of goods and services, as bank, school, and museum, as hospital and theatre, in short, as a nucleus which gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence. . . the medieval Indian temple has few parallels in the annals of mankind.[104]

That institutions of the scale of the Brihadisvara temple were rare during the early eleventh century when it was completed,

[101] Srinivasan, 'Tirukamakottam', op. cit.

[102] *History of Dharmaśāstra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law)*, v. 3, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1946, p. 183.

[103] K.R. Subramanian, 'Economic Conditions of the Thevaram Period', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 18 (1927-8), p. 271.

[104] *The Cōḷas*, p. 654.

but widespread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is well documented. Harle's work on the gateways (*gōpuram*) of Chidambaram helps to clarify the relationship between one of the distinctive architectural elements of the age and the consequences in the scale of the temple complex.

> *Gopuras*, due to the way in which the South Indian temple evolved after the twelfth century, came to supersede the central shrine as the largest and architecturally the most important buildings in the temple. The same evolution called for additional enclosures and consequently more and more of these gateways in all the large temples, with the result that the South Indian temple builders henceforth devoted the greater part of their talents and energy to building *gopuras*.[105]

Along with Chidambaram, the major temple construction which was completed during the time of Kulottunga III (A.D. 1178-1217), many other important temple centres have been identified by art historians as dating from this period: Darasuram (Kumbakonam taluk, Tanjavur), Tribhuvanam (Pondicherry), Tiruvanaikkaval (or Jambukesvara on Srirangam Island, Tiruchchirapalli).[106] There is further evidence that stylistic elements of this later Chola temple architecture influenced construction as far away as Konarak in Orissa where the famed chariot-like (*ratha*) appearance of this temple of the thirteenth century was apparently an adaptation of the same motifs on lesser scale at Darasuram and Chidambaram.[107]

The enlarged temple precincts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the addition of independent shrines with their ritual functionaries, servants, and workmen, the heightened tempo of participation by increasing numbers of pilgrims from all respectable groups — not only Brahmans — direct attention to the basic change in venue of the prime religious activities of the age. Sizeable urban settlements became an adjunct of great temples; where they did not exist, they were created. It is said of the town of Tirupati that the Vaishnava teacher Ramanuja, while sojourning in the Vengadam Hills and at its sacred shrine on Tirumalai, ordered that temple functionaries and others serving in the new

[105] Harle, op. cit., p. viii.

[106] This identification was made by Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., and concurred in by Harle (op. cit., pp. 40-1, 70) for Darasuram and Tribhuvani. Tiruvanakkaval is discussed by Harle (op. cit., pp. 76-7), citing the opinion of Percy Brown.

[107] C. Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan*, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1955, pp. 18-19, 23.

temple of Sri Govindarajaswami at the base of Tirumalai, must take up residence near the new temple. The town was thus established in about A.D. 1130 to serve the requirements of the shrines of Venkatesvara and Govindarajaswami.[108] In a somewhat similar way, the Bhaktavatsalam temple at the Saivite centre of Tirukkalukkunram in Chingleput district was built at the base of the hill shrine during the thirteenth century, forming the nucleus of the medieval town.[109] The western part of modern Kanchi came to have as its most important shrine that of the god Varadaraja who, to the eleventh century, was housed in a small shrine in the village of Attiyur, a suburb of Kanchi. This small shrine was enlarged to its grandiose medieval proportions during the twelfth century to form the core of a Vishnu centre — involving eighteen temples according to traditions of the place — now called 'Vishnu-Kanchi'.[110] Substantial enlargement of the ancient Saivite shrine at Tiruvorriyur (Chingleput district) including the outer walled enclosure (*prakāram*) of that temple was built by the chief Adimangalam during the thirty-first year of Kulottunga III, A.D. 1209.[111] At Suchindram in the far south (Travancore), the temple began to become the 'spiritual metropolis of Nāñcinād', as K.K. Pillay has put it, after the beginning of the thirteenth century when control shifted from the *mahasabha* of the place to a group of temple functionaries called *yōgakkar*. Pillay observed that:

> . . . several prosperous villages exercised a considerable influence on the pagoda, all located within a radius of four miles of Sucīndram. . . . Benefactions and endowments have freely flowed from them. Crowds of visitors and devotees from these places used to flock to the shrine everyday, and particularly on festive occasions. . . . The people of these villages have contributed to the prosperity and fame of the pagoda, while they themselves were influenced by the sacred temple and its institutions.[112]

Other modern towns around Madras city apparently date from the same time, judging from architectural remains.

[108] Viraraghavacharya, *The Tirupati Temple*, v. 1, pp. 357-9.

[109] Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 222. Also *see* Jagdisa Ayyar, *South Indian Shrines*, op. cit., p. 25.

[110] K.V. Soundara Rajan, 'Kaustubha Prasada — New Light on Jayakha Tantra', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, v. 17, no.1 (1967), pp. 73-5. He notes that at the end of the eleventh century the god was called Attiyur Alvar after the place.

[111] K.V. Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, Amudha Nilayam Private Ltd., Madras, 1959, pp. 242, 244-58.

[112] Pillay, *Sucīndram Temple*, op. cit., p. 12.

The very process of construction must have lasted for years as suggested by Harle[113] and would have brought into the neighbourhood of construction workmen, skilled and unskilled, from quite distant places. Workmen would remain as an urban population for an extended period and would thus have required the services of still others. The total effect of such activities would thus have been to create settlements with modes of organization considerably different from the peasant villages of the locality and from those established *brahmadeya*s which were not themselves the core settlements of the new towns.

Changes in social organization would have been most evident among trading groups and artisans. Reference has already been made to the presumed impact of temple construction and the generally increased significance of these new centres upon traders and artisans. Skilled artisans comprising the Kammalar are seen to have achieved new prerogatives and social privileges during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries as their services in connection with temple building appreciated. This enhanced position was the springboard for launching the effective left-hand grouping of castes (*idangai*) in Tamil country. And, north of Tamil country — in what is now Andhra Pradesh — the work of K. Sundaram describes the rise to new prominence, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of groups like the Telikis (oil mongers) of Bezwada, the merchants (Vaisyas) of Penugonda, and the Balanja merchants of Ayyavali who 'imitated the chiefs and potentates and assumed. . . titles likewise'.[114]

The relationship between new temple centres and social and economic change permit the use of the term 'urbanization' during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; this is perhaps most clearly documented in Appadorai's study of economic conditions. In his chapter entitled, 'Towns and Internal Trade', he states that 'a temple has often been made the nucleus around which a town in course of time grew'.[115] As is often the case in his discussion, there is no effort to discern changes within the five centuries covered by his study. However, it is inscriptional evidence of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries along with foreign travellers' reports for the Vijayanagara period upon which his discussion of towns is

[113] Op. cit., p. 41.

[114] Sundaram, '*Studies in Economic and Social Conditions* . . .', p. 30.

[115] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, ch. 3, pp. 338 ff.

based. The only exception to this is in his references to the ancient towns of Tanjavur and Kanchi.[116] Of considerable importance in his discussion of the 'economic organization of the town',[117] is his attention to the nature of guilds and their relationship to *jātis*.

Appadorai contrasts the medieval European guild with what he calls 'the Indian caste-gild',[118] on the basis of recruitment. In the former, membership was restricted to those of the same profession in a relatively confined area whereas in the latter, 'in practice' and '*in the main*' birth-determined membership.[119] He further observes that according to *smṛiti* — the *Mitakshara* of Vijnanesvara of the twelfth century — guilds (*śreṇī*) comprised those who earned their livelihoods by the same kind of work though belonging to different castes (*jātis*).[120] That trade and artisan groups were often members of different castes receives support from inscriptional usage. The term *kalaṉai* is often used to designate artisans; this has been mentioned in connection with left-hand castes[121] where the same term is used to refer to persons of 'mixed caste'.[122] Related to this is the suggestion by the epigraphist K.G. Krishnan that the term *śaṅkarappāḍiyār*, which often appears in inscriptions from the tenth century on, means those who reside in the quarter reserved for mixed or confused (*śaṅkara*) castes, not, as earlier suggested by Krishna Sastri, those residing in a quarter for Siva worshippers.[123] Groupings such as the *śaṅkarappāḍiyār* and *kil kalaṉaiyār* or *puṟa-kalaṉaiyār* are collective terms for merchants and artisans living in populous centres; such terms occur at an early time. An inscription of A.D. 1036 in the reign of Rajendra I[124]

[116] Ibid., v. 1, p. 350, n.64.

[117] Ibid., 356 ff.

[118] Ibid., p. 357.

[119] Italics in the original (ibid., p. 357).

[120] Ibid., pp. 358-60.

[121] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xxii, *kalaṉai*, and xxvii, *kīḻ-kalaṉai*. Also, 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.S.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, p. 35.

[122] *A.R.E.*, 1909 (para. 45) refers to *karaṇī* in connection with the artisan group, the *rathakāras*.

[123] *A.R.E.*, 1964-5 (p. 15) regarding no.305 of that year but also applies to the following records: 293, 300, 309 from Valikandapuram (Perambalur taluk, Tiruchirapalli). This is in contrast to the older view expressed in *S.I.I.*, v. 3, p. 275n., as cited by Mahalingam (*South Indian Polity*, p. 389n).

[124] *S.I.I.*, v. 4, no.223, line 25ff.

refers to the founding of a trade centre (*nagaram*) in the eastern hamlet of the great *brahmadeya* of Chidambaram. This hamlet came to be called Gunamenagaipuram and was settled by merchants (*vyāpārins*) and cultivators of high status (*veḷḷāns*), lesser merchants (*saṅkappāḍiyār*), cloth merchants (*sāliyar*) and fishermen (*pattinavar*), as well as lesser artisans (*kīḻ-kalaṉai*) including carpenters (*taccar*), goldsmiths (*taṭṭār*), blacksmiths (*kollar*), and coarse cloth weavers (*kōliyar*).[125]

These early references to trading and artisan groups whose economic activities were only tangentially related to agrarian production, whose consumers were not restricted to specific landed patrons but necessarily to a wider market, and whose activities made them mobile in ways different from groups attached to landed patronage are essentially references to what has here been called the 'outer core' of nuclear agrarian territories, *nadu*s.[126] However, it is clear that such mobile occupational groups existed as part of the population of the inner core of *nadu*s as well, in many *brahmadeya*s during the tenth to twelfth centuries, and as part of the general economic order outside these Brahman settlements; it is also apparent that these mobile, mercantile and craft groups constituted the prestigious core membership of the left-hand castes. With the rise of towns during the twelfth century, these groups attained a greater public presence and importance as supporters of Vedic temples. Artisans and merchants are referred to by the collective title *puṟa-kalaṉai* in an A.D. 1343 inscription from Pulipparakoyil (Madhurantakam taluk, Chingleput). This term specifically included cloth merchants (*sāliyar* and *kaikkōḷār*), general merchants (*vāṇigar*), and military as well as temple or palace shopkeepers (*sēṉaiaṅgāḍiyār* and *kōyil-aṅgāḍiyār*).[127] Urban places of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, provided the basis for vastly enhanced social power than was achievable by such groups in the

[125] Discussed in detail in 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.S.M.S.*, v. 45, no.1, p. 35. Subrahmanya Aiyer also discusses this matter in *E.I.*, v. 22, no.24, 'Uttaramallur Inscription of Parāntaka I', pp. 146-7. Also note, *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 2, p. 1197, *kōlikar*, and *kōliyan*, loc. cit.; and *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 6, p. 3586, *vāṇikam*.

[126] An important theoretical statement of these two classes of castes is found in D. Pocock, 'Notes on *jajmani* relationships', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, v. 6 (1962), pp. 78ff.

[127] *A.R.E.*, 1910, no.298. Relevant portions of this inscription are translated in *E.I.*, v. 22, no.24, p. 146, n. no.4.

rural context where the inner-core of land-linked relations continued to dominate.

Having said all of this and having indicated the processes at work during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries over substantial parts of the South Indian macro region, it is still a fact that little is known about any particular place. Ironically, impressions about particular urban centres are much more vivid during the Sangam Age than in any period thereafter until Vijayanagara times when foreign accounts are a major source of information. One foreign source for the twelfth century is the Chinese *Chu-fan-chï* by Chan Ju-kua.[128] Here, there is a reference to thirty-two trade centres ('pu-lo' or *pura*) twelve of which are on the west coast, eight in the south, and twelve in the north. Of these, few can be identified with certainty.[129] Another set of vague references to urban places is found in inscriptions of the *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭār* and other records in which merchant groups are mentioned. In a Piramalai inscription of the early thirteenth century discussed by K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer,[130] reference is made to eighteen established towns with palatial buildings (*māḍavīḍu-padiṉeṭṭu-paṭṭinam*), thirty-two growing towns (*vaḷarpuram*), and sixty-four other urban places (*kadigai-tālvaḷam* or *sthāna*).[131] These numbers have the suspicious mark of the conventional about them, and reliance can only be placed on the list of towns in the last part of the inscription referring to *nagarattār*s from particular places in Pandyamandalam around Piranmalai (including portions of Kulittalai taluk in Tiruchirapalli) and some places in Kongumandalam which can be located.[132] These latter places are called *nagaram*, *paṭṭinam*, and *puram*; they are also called *ūr* and *perunteru* ('great road').[133]

From the twelfth century on, there is considerable evidence suggesting that trade and urban life were becoming much more significant than these had been during the period of the great Cholas when merchants (*nagarattār*) were almost always linked subordinately to *brahmadeya*s and other large agrarian settlements.

[128] Translated and annotated by Friedrich Hirth and W.W. Rockhill, St. Petersburg, 1911, pp. 93-102.

[129] Ibid., pp. 94-5, 99, n. no.5.

[130] 'Largest Provincial Organizations . . .', *Q.J.M.S.*, v. 45, no.4, p. 270, ls. 1-4.

[131] Ibid., p. 280.

[132] Ibid., p. 272.

[133] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 4, pp. 2036-7, *teru*.

That many Brahman villages were in fact settlements of considerable size, with diverse populations and functions, is quite clear. However, during the twelfth century merchants and artisan groups began to separate themselves from the constraints of Brahman and peasant rural control. This process of separation, in the Coromandel plain, at least, was accompanied by new status claims by merchants and artisans, as noticed in the discussion of the left division of castes and as further noticed in temple honours sought and gained by these groups. Essentially, the growing importance of urban places was dependent upon the increasingly vigorous trade throughout the macro region resulting from the wealth and stability of the agrarian integration of the previous two centuries. Settlements with substantial numbers of merchants and artisans rose to new importance. An important additional factor in the rise of such settlements was the increasing tempo of temple building in which places of perhaps ancient sacred importance, neglected during the period of the ascendancy of *brahmadeyas* as sacred centres, were recognized anew. The requirements of the various new or enlarged pilgrimage centres both promoted and facilitated the development of urban trade centres.

Simultaneously, an increasingly differentiated ruling class in the countryside — the *periyanattar* — found it advantageous to co-operate with those townsmen and the powerful, itinerant mercantile groups with whom urban merchants were affiliated. This is evident in the many inscriptions from most parts of the macro region speaking of the *citramēḷi-periyanāṭṭāvar* and the *tiśai āiyirattu-aiññūrruvar* to which K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer and others have drawn attention.[134] Supra-locality rulers dramatically extended the basis of their power beyond the locality peasantry from which they had emerged and beyond an earlier alliance with rural Brahmans. Towns provided new sources of wealth and new sources of prestige from association with temples and *mathas*. While still essentially a rurally based ruling stratum where, as members of supra-local bodies, they dominated agrarian affairs, these erstwhile local peasant leaders found in the weakness of the Chola overlordship — for which they bore some responsibility — and in the wealth and prestige of towns the means of enhancing their authority

[134] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Largest Provincial Organizations. . .', *Q.J.M.S.* and K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and T.N. Subramaniam, 'Hemavati Pillar Inscription of Kulottungachola (III), Year 2', *E.I.*, v. 31, no.37, pp. 274-5.

as it was not before possible to do. The major shift from an agrarian base of power in which locality organization was founded upon a balanced and close relationship between communities of Brahmans and peasants (*nattar*) to one in which a part of the latter, as the *periyanattar*, had attained hegemonic authority over several, contiguous localities and their constituent communities appears to have been accomplished by the fourteenth century. This change produced an altered relationship with the Chola overlords of the macro region.

The earliest manifestations of an altered power structure dates from the twelfth century succession struggles among later Chola rulers as noticed by K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and T.N. Subramaniam, who state:

> The organization of the Śittiramēḷi-Periyanāṭṭāvar which came into existence about this time [the fourth regnal year of Rajadhirajachola II, *c.* A.D. 1172] very soon obtained a firm footing in the Tamil country and was very influential throughout the reign of Kulōttunga III. We may not therefore be wrong in surmising that this organization paved the way for the ultimate success of Kulōttunga in getting the Chōla throne.[135]

During the next three centuries, this stratum of powerful men was to become merged in the new and highly martial power system of the Vijayanagara period.

[135] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri and T.N. Subramaniam, op, cit., pp. 274-5. It should be noted that this surmise is questioned by the learned editor of *E.I.*, D.C. Sircar (op. cit., 275n.).

CHAPTER VII

The Chola State and the Agrarian Order

I

Among the greatest states in medieval India in its durability and the scope of its authority was the Chola state. Considering only the period of its dominance over most of Tamil country, the Chola state lasted for three centuries, and, during its great days, from about A.D. 950 to A.D. 1100 (the reigns of Sundara Chola to Kulottunga I), Chola authority covered most of the southern half of peninsular India. It is therefore quite understandable that this state should have received the very substantial attention which it has from three generations of historians. What is singular, however, is that notwithstanding the deep study and appreciation of the Chola state there is profound difficulty in determining the relation of the state to the agrarian order of that time.

Why this condition should exist is more appropriately the subject of a separate historiographical essay.[1] Here, it may suffice to consider briefly the way in which the Chola state is conceived in the conventional historiography and how this conception has prevented an adequate understanding of either the political system or the agrarian order of the age. It may also be noted that the problem is not limited to the Chola state, but includes most South Indian states prior to the establishment of British rule in South India.

At the outset it should be noted that ideas about the relationship of the medieval state and the agrarian system most often err with reference to the state. This is unexpected since South Indian historiography has been as deficient in economic-historical analysis as most other regions of the sub-continent. But, and perhaps this

[1] See the author's 'The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historiographical Critique', in *Essays on South India*, ed. Burton Stein, Asian Studies in Hawaii, no.15, 1975, The University Press, Hawaii, Honolulu.

is true of pre-modern historical research in other parts of the sub-continent, the evidence pertaining to the agrarian economy is the same as that pertaining to political arrangements. It is the same limited corpus of stone and metal inscriptions. South Indian historians, with very few exceptions, have taken the data on most economic arrangements as given in the inscriptions. These records describe quite localized systems of agrarian production and exchange.

When dealing with the state, however, the preconceptions of the historian have been permitted to intrude upon the basic evidence with the result that the Chola state as well as other medieval South Indian states have tended to be conceived as great unitary states under powerful kings whose will was worked through an elaborate bureaucratic apparatus assisted by a powerful military establishment. The more prudent and accurate depiction of agrarian arrangements results, to some extent, from a neglect of, or at least a diminished interest in, such material matters whereas the the deep interest in and attention to political arrangements have served principally to distort notions about the state.

This contrast is most evident in the treatment of what is almost always called 'local government'. Most discussions of the Chola state speak of several levels of state organization, from the 'central royal administration' to the 'local government'; most have also presumed 'self-sufficient' villages. Actually, only two levels of government have been dealt with. These are the king, with 'his' military and 'his' bureaucratic organizations, and the local level. Linkages between these two levels are poorly defined; for the most part, they are inferred. In some cases, linkages are altogether ignored. Most discussions of local, rural society, display a keen appreciation for the well-developed, self-governing institutions of locality society: the village community, castes, and guilds. Local taxation and the local management of institutions are extensively documented since the vernacular portions of inscriptions recording grants pertain to these issues primarily. At times, however, this appreciation becomes excessive as when Nilakanta Sastri likens South Indian villages to the Roman cities of Gaul and cites Fustel de Coulanges to the effect that if the Gallic city (and the South Indian villages to which it is compared) 'was not a free state; it was at any rate a state'.[2] In yet another place Nila-

[2] *The Cōḷas*, p. 515.

kanta Sastri speaks of Chola society as 'a federation of ['hereditary and voluntary'] groups' appearing to have no territorial basis.[3]

As compared to the richly documented vigour of locality institutions within the territory claimed by the Cholas and in which their inscriptions are found, the 'central government' has a poorly documented and often tortuously argued existence. Nilakanta Sastri speaks of 'the almost Byzantine royalty of Rājarāja'.[4] Explicitly, he intends to contrast the kingship of the earlier Classical period with that of the Chola period. He and others have certainly produced convincing evidence of a conception of kingship during the Chola period which is very different from that of the Classical age. However, the contrast denigrates the changes in South Indian kingship of the intervening Pallava age when a full-blown, Brahmanical royal institution was brought into being and shaped the Chola kingship. In the inscriptions of both kingships, a major expressive element consisted of royal support of grants to Hindu temples and to Brahmans. It is noteworthy that ancient royal sacrifices (*yāgas*) such as the *aśvamēdha*, prominent in the early Pallava period (i.e. before the eighth century), are rarely mentioned in Chola inscriptions. Instead, the Chola kings devoted substantial wealth to the construction of great temples such as the Brihadisvara temple of Rajaraja I at Tanjavur and the Gangaikondacholapuram temple of Rajendra I. These temples are considered as sepulchral monuments by some scholars, including Nilakanta Sastri, who are led to compare this feature to that of the God-king (*dēvarāja*) conception of South-east Asia.[5] Still other temples possessed portrait images of some Chola rulers who might have been worshipped.[6] Some of these issues will be considered further below.

However, another kind of meaning must be attributed to the phrase, 'Byzantine monarchy'. That is, the Chola king is seen as the executive over a vast and powerful bureaucracy and military organization. Nilakanta Sastri writes: 'What distinguished [the Cōḷa government'] . . . was the superior executive strength it was able to develop by bringing into existence a highly organized and thoroughly efficient bureaucracy'.[7] A great army and navy are

[3] Ibid., p. 462.
[4] Ibid., p. 451.
[5] Ibid., p. 452-3.
[6] Ibid., p. 453.
[7] Ibid., p. 462.

presumed to have existed under the control and maintenance of Chola kings. The existence of a 'Chola navy' is based upon a few questionable references to 'numberless ships' in Chola inscriptional preambles and upon the still mysterious adventurers of Rajendra I in Malayan waters. More cogently, the presumed maritime activity of the Cholas rests upon the old view still clung to by many Indian historians of a 'Greater India' and Hindu colonization in South-east Asia, a view which has been brought into serious question by recent work in the history of that region.[8]

Chola armies have a more substantial reality. The conquests of Chola rulers from Sundara Chola (A.D. 956-73) to Kulottunga I (A.D. 1070-1120) are real enough, but these conquests neither presuppose nor required a vast, standing army. Military power was possessed by numerous chiefs, by itinerant merchant groups, and others throughout the Chola macro region. These were locally recruited and controlled forces. It is one of the major flaws in the reading of Chola evidence to see armed force as the monopoly of the Chola kingship, and it is important to recognize that upon the specious notion of a vast, central and standing army much of the justification for the Chola bureaucracy rests.

There is, in fact, no direct evidence of a central bureaucratic organization with competence over the Chola macro region. Such an organization is called into existence by the presumption of a need for it. It is not the case that evidence of the existence of a centralized, bureaucratized administrative structure prompted the reasonable question of what this administration was for in medieval South India. The idea of such an administrative structure is based on the unsubstantiated supposition of a central military establishment, and the maintenance of this establishment and other presumed 'central' functions was seen to require a centralized bureaucratic state structure. It can be shown that there existed neither a centrally controlled military organization nor centrally coordinated redistribution of what were regarded as state resources. Military needs and the support of religious institutions and Brahmans were met from resources allocated by those under whose the control such resources were: locality chieftains, not the

[8] *Eg.*, O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce; A Study of the Origins of Śrīvijaya*, Cornell University Press, lthaca, 1967, pp. 64-5; and Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese; Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1961, pp. 201-3.

Chola rulers, except as the latter were themselves locality leaders in the central parts of the Kaveri basin.

Nilakanta Sastri has been the most eloquent spokesman for the presumed centralized state structure of the Cholas, but he is not alone in this conception. In considering the agrarian system of the Chola macro region, there is some advantage in examining the position of A. Appadorai, one of Nilakanta Sastri's best students. With his mentor, Appadorai assumes that the royal government permeated all aspects of life, and yet, Appadorai's discussion of the state and the economy is one of the briefest chapters of his large, two volume work, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000-1500 A.D.)*.[9]

The key to Appadorai's understanding of the relationship between the state and the agrarian order is his understanding of the term *kaḍamai*. He, along with most Chola scholars construe the term to refer to land revenue paid in kind to the 'central government'. This is confirmed by his distinction between 'land revenue' (*kaḍamai*) and a group of other taxes which 'were not likely to reach the central government'.[10] In attempting to estimate the rate of this payment to the 'central government', Appadorai presented a table based on inscriptional references to payments due in kind per unit of land.[11] These references range from A.D. 1011 to A.D. 1504. The assessments are given in or converted to *kalam*s (a dry measure equal to six cubic feet) per *vēli* or *mā* (equal to 6.6 and 1.65 acres respectively).[12] The crops include paddy, sugarcane, sesamum, millets, and gingelly. As Appadorai observes, these data drawn from several parts of the Tamil plain at different times yield great variation in rates. For paddy alone in two eleventh century inscriptions from Tanjavur, the difference is a thousand per cent! Dissatisfied with the variation produced from these data, Appadorai cited an A.D. 1325 Pandyan inscription from Vadavanpatti (modern Sivaganga taluk, Ramnad) where the *kaḍamai* is given as three *kalams* of paddy per *mā* yielding forty *kalams*.[13] This rate of three-fortieths is rejected by Appadorai as 'too favourable to the peasant' and 'exceptional'! The rate which is finally

[9] Appadorai, op. cit., Ch. VI, 'The Sphere of the State', v. 2, pp. 661-732.
[10] Ibid., p. 681.
[11] Ibid., pp. 677-8.
[12] Ibid., 'Appendix', pp. 783-5.
[13] *A.R.E.*, 1924, para. 38; 39/1924.

settled upon is the classical one-sixth, the conventional fraction of production due to the king according to *smṛiti* texts from the time of Manu.[14] In support of this rate, Appadorai cited a text of the Vijayanagara period and statements of the early British administrator, Thomas Munro.[15]

T.V. Mahalingam, in his *South Indian Polity*,[16] repeated Appadorai's argument without, however, mentioning his work. Like Appadorai, Mahalingam does not question to whom the *kaḍamai* was paid, it being assumed that the land revenue went to the 'central government'.[17] Also like Appadorai, and all other writers who hold the same position, Mahalingam does not ask how the *kaḍamai* in kind was converted into income for the 'central government'. Considering that the *kaḍamai* is not expressly stated in the inscriptions of the period to be a payment to the 'central government', crucial importance attaches to the question of how the proceeds from agricultural production were in fact realized by the Chola rulers in the Kaveri. The same question does not arise with the Vijayanagara state on the Tungabhadra with which both Mahalingam and Appadorai deal because both accept foreign accounts which describe tribute payments from subordinate Vijayanagara warriors as the major source of state revenue.

Several factors operate to explain the persistence of the belief that the Chola state exercised management over the agrarian economy of the time. One is ideological. Three generations of South Indian historians have taken pride in what they perceived to be elaborate, centralized governments during the medieval period. This sentiment was reinforced by ancient and medieval political treatises which spoke of powerful monarchical states and by later British writers with their own commitment to centralized bureaucratic government and with their, often self-deluded (and self-serving), notion that the government of the East India Company simply restored proper government to South India after a century or more of 'chaos'. The robustness of the belief of historians

[14] *The Ordinances of Manu*, ed. and transl. A.C. Burnell and E.W. Hopkins, London, 1884, ch. VII, verses 130-1. Actually, three rates are given here: one-sixth, one-eighth, and one-twelfth.

[15] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 679-80.

[16] Originally published in 1954 by the University of Madras; revised edition, 1967 used here, pp. 158-72.

[17] Mahalingam does question the one-sixth rate, however; ibid., p. 166.

and others in centralized polities of the medieval period apparently discouraged attempts to formulate a theory of government which conformed better with the facts known of the medieval period. This was true despite the suspicion with which literary sources of the period were held by Nilakanta Sastri especially.[18] Even Mahalingam, though less troubled by the often didactic *nīti* texts, appears cautious in his use of a 'manual of administration' of the Vijayanagara period attributed to Madhvacharya. First, he cites the following statement from the *Parasara Madhaviya*:

> As the florist in the garden plucks blossoms successively put forth and does not eradicate the flowering shrub, so should the king drawing revenue from his subjects, take the sixth part of the actual produce; like the maker of charcoal extirpating the tree burns the whole plant, let not the king so treat his subjects.[19]

Mahalingam then cautions that:

> . . . works like the *Parāśaramādhavīya* deal more with the theoretical side of taxation than the practical side of it; and unless such indirect and less reliable evidence are corroberated by the evidence of contemporary inscriptions it is difficult to accept their value.[20]

Notwithstanding this prudent reservation, Mahalingam assumes that the central government — the king — received a portion of agrarian production from even distant territories. This is assumed without questioning how these royal claims to revenue were realized. Medieval *nīti* formulas are little more reliable than the speculations of later British administrators with respect to the function of the state during the medieval period. Both assume a uniformity of usage which is not substantiated by more reliable evidence; both also exaggerate the legitimacy and capability of South Indian medieval rulers to income from tracts over which they did not exercise direct dominance.

The matter of uniformity has received recent attention from N. Karashima and B. Sitaraman. Based on one of the most exhaustive surveys of Chola records,[21] these two scholars analysed Chola

[19] Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, p. 167.

[20] Ibid., p. 169.

[21] They estimate that of approximately 9,000 Chola inscriptions that have been noticed, some 3,500 have been published. Of these, forty per cent refer to revenue terms, land grants, and land transfers. Noboru Karashima and B. Sitaraman, 'Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Tokyo, no.5 (1972), p. 88.

inscriptions from A.D. 846 to A.D. 1279 (the reigns of Vijayalaya to Rajendra III) in the two great territories of the Chola macro region: Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam (or, to use the Chola period designation for the latter, Jayankondacholamandalam). Taking terms which occur ten times or more, twenty-seven revenue terms are analysed chronologically and topographically. It was found that eleven of these frequently used terms (forty per cent) are found in Tondaimandalam only. The authors conclude that 'there existed a different administrative procedure or economic set-up in one *maṇḍalam* as distinguished from the other'.[22] While this analysis on a *mandalam* basis minimized differences within each of the great territories — differences that would be very great — these findings should have a sobering effect upon those who propound, or more often simply imply, a unitary state theory as do most writers on the Cholas.

Moreover, the analysis of Karashima and Sitaraman casts deep doubt upon the view that some portion of agrarian production from even the central core of the territory claimed by the Cholas found its way to a central treasury. From Karashima's previous writing, this view of a centralized fiscal structure may have been expected.[23] Few of the twenty-seven most frequently mentioned terms refer explicitly to cash payments, e.g. *kāśu āyam* and *vēli kāśu*. The former term, used in Tondaimandalam, means quite literally a tax or payment in money; the latter term which occurs in both of the *mandalam*s means a charge of one *kāśu* (probably a copper coin) per *vēli*, 6.6 acres of cultivated land.[24] Others among the twenty-seven terms may have been cash payments, of course. *Kurrat-teṇḍam* was a fine levied in Tondaimandalam and *taṭṭar-*

[22] Ibid., p. 90.

[23] Among the writings to which reference can be made are: 'Allur and Isanamangalam: Two South Indian Villages of the Cola Times', *Proceedings of the First International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies,* Kuala Lumpur, 1966, pp. 426-37; 'The Power Structure of the Cola Rule', Presented to the Second Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, January, 1967; 'Historical Development of South Indian Society' ('Minami indo shakai no re kishi teki hatten'), in *Indo shi okeru tochi seido to kenryoku Rōzō,* ed. Toru Matsui and Toshio Yamazuki, Tokyo University Press, Tokyo, pp. 73-105.

[24] 'Epigraphical Glossary of Terms Relating to Taxes and other Dues Customary and Feudal (Prepared for a Topographical List of Inscriptions in the Madras and Kerala States), Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, 1967 (typescript).

paṭṭam was a tax on goldsmiths applied in both territories.[25] Both could have been payable in cash. However, most of the terms enumerated by Karashima and Sitaraman refer to payments in labour or in kind. The point previously raised about the manner in which payments in kind were converted to money or otherwise made available to the 'central government' is underscored by these findings.

But, it is the *kaḍamai* from all parts of the Chola territory which is regarded as the primary source of revenue for the Cholas as it was for the British. This term occurs with six others which Karashima and Sitaraman found were used in both of the *mandalam*s and which occur with at least twice the frequency of the other twenty terms. Glossaries of inscriptional terms of the Chola period identify *kaḍamai* as a land tax payable in kind to government;[26] most would agree with Appadorai that 'government' meant 'central government'. More generally, however, the words *kaḍamai* or *kaḍam* mean 'duty' or 'obligation' then as now.[27]

There is no question that *kaḍamai* was used in Chola times to designate a tax, but there are questions of whether it was a tax paid to the 'central government' as implied in most writing and whether it was a tax on land only. Appadorai's view, as already noticed, is that *kaḍamai* was 'land revenue' paid to the 'central government' and was distinguishable from other taxes on agrarian production which were 'utilized for maintaining irrigation works, for payment of village officers, and for the maintenance of temples'.[28] The last three categories of payments are seen as local cesses. Similarly, in the analysis of Karashima and Sitaraman, the seven most frequent revenue terms found in both Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam include *kaḍamai*. These writers do not consider the meanings of the terms they have classified chronologically and topographically, but the six other terms would appear to be local dues exclusively. Thus, the terms *echchōru*,

[25] Karashima and Sitaraman, op. cit., pp. 90-1.

[26] See the glossary of Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, p. 426 and *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xx. Also *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 659.

[27] The terms figure prominently, if dubiously at times, in the doctoral thesis of Stanley J. Heginbotham, 'Patterns and Sources of Indian Bureaucratic Behaviour; Organizational Pressures and the Ethic of Duty in a Tamil Nadu Development Program', Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1970. Here, *kaḍamai* is unaccountably transliterated 'kardemai', and is equated with the term *dharma*, p. 321.

[28] Appadorai, op. cit., II, pp. 680-1.

muṭṭaiy-aḷ and *veṭṭi* refer to obligations by local groups to perform labour; the term *antarayan* refers to taxes levied by local bodies. *Kuḍimai*,[29] another of the frequently mentioned terms is generally understood to refer to all taxes and dues except those from the land; *kuḍimai* is thus contrasted with *kaḍamai*. Finally, the term *taṭṭār-pāṭṭam* is a professional tax levied on goldsmiths and possibly realized in money. Excluding the last term and the generic terms *kuḍimai* and *kaḍamai*, the other four most frequently mentioned terms appear to be local dues. In the absence of any known process for the conversion of payments in kind to money, the only revenue source which could practicably have been realized by the 'central government' was the professional tax. There is no evidence to support the view that *kaḍamai* was a payment from localities to the 'central government'. The generic revenue terms *kaḍamai* and *kuḍimai* appear simply to have been terms for taxes; they imply no reference to the source (i.e. whether from the land or not) nor the recipient (i.e. whether local or extralocal).

Nilakanta Sastri notes that the meanings of *kaḍamai* and *kuḍimai* are 'quite close in meaning'; both refer to 'duties of the *kuḍiś*' or people, and he assumes that both terms refer to payments to the 'King's government'.[30] The latter notion is based on the extremely slender evidence of phrases in inscriptions such as the following of Rajaraja I from Tiruvaduturai in Cholamandalam: 'Any kind of *kuḍimai* [is] due at the Sacred Victorious Gate [*tiruk-kor̲ra-vāśal* including] the taxation (*varippāḍu*) levied by the *ūr* (town or village), and any other type of *kuḍimai*.'[31] The phrase *tiruk-kor̲r̲u-vāśal*, upon which much hangs in this interpretation, can also mean 'the masonry gateway before the chief god of the temple', and since the record cited pertains to an arrangement for the provision of dues to a temple, the latter meaning of the phrase may be what was intended. In several places, Nilakanta Sastri provides evidence against his own definition. He cites inscriptions in which the *kaḍamai* was possessed not by the 'king's government', but by various kinds of settlements including those under the control of temples (*devadana* and *tiruvidyaitam*), Jains (*paḷḷiccandam*), learned persons (*agarapparru*, *maḍapuram*), village

[29] *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 971.

[30] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 522-3.

[31] *Loc. cit.*; a summary of this inscription is found in *The Cōḷas*, I, p. 505, referring *A.R.E.* 1925, no.121. Also, *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 1917 *(tirvācal)* and p. 1167 *(kor̲ru)*.

servants and officials (*jīvataparru*), and soldiers (*paḍiaparru* and *vanniyapparru*).[32] Moreover, he provides examples of the use of the term *kaḍamai* to refer to dues on productive capacity other than regular field agriculture.[33] This included several references to *kaḍamai* for oil-mongers and one to *kaḍamai* on areca trees.[34]

This discussion of Chola revenue has intended to draw attention to the largely conjectural and imputed nature of the Chola state in the existing historiography. It is the purpose of this chapter to propose a model of the Chola state which is fundamentally different from the existing model, which also fits the known evidence of the Chola period better.

II

In order to consider a better model of political arrangements in medieval South Indian states than the existing one, it is necessary to recognize that there are many kinds of states, of which the unitary, centralized state is but one. It is, however, precisely that one which most South Indian historians assume to have been normative during the medieval period, and, except when the king was weak or the kingdoms troubled by natural disasters or invasions, these historians claim actually to have existed. In fact, this type of unitary state did not exist nor could it have existed in medieval South India any more than in medieval India as whole, with the possible exception of the Mughal state of the seventeenth century; nor did such a state exist in most of the world prior to the industrial revolution which provided the technology and mobile force required to sustain unitary states as we know them.

In this section, another type of state formation is proposed as more in conformity with extant evidence. This is the pyramidally segmented type of state, so-called because the smallest unit of political organization — for example, a section of a peasant village — was linked to ever more comprehensive units of political organization of an ascending order (e.g., village, locality, supra-locality, and kingdom) for various purposes, but that each unit stood in opposition to other, similar units (e.g., one section of a

[32] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 505, 585.
[33] Ibid., pp. 526, 532.
[34] Ibid., p. 532.

village as against another) for other purposes. The most fully elaborated discussion of this type of political system has been provided by Aidan Southall for an East African society, the Alur.

In his study,[35] Southall is concerned with a political order which he contends is different from, and contrasts with, the unitary state, but is yet a 'state'. The 'state' in most modern usage is seen to be comprised of four elements: territorial sovereignty, centralized government, specialized ruling or administrative classes, and monopoly of legitimate force or political control by the centre. To the contention that state forms other than unitary ones are 'transitory', Southall responds with the description of a stable, and, he contends, widespread form which he calls 'segmentary'. The characteristics of the segmentary state are the following:

> (1) Territorial sovereignty is recognized but limited and essentially relative, forming a series of zones in which authority is most absolute near the centre and increasingly restricted towards the periphery, often shading off into a ritual hegemony.
>
> (2) There is centralized government, yet there are also numerous peripheral focuses of administration over which the centre exercises only a limited control.
>
> (3) There is a specialized administrative staff at the centre, but it is repeated on a reduced scale at all the peripheral focuses of administration.
>
> (4) Monopoly of the use of force is successfully claimed to a limited extent and within a limited range by a central authority, but legitimate force on a more restricted order inheres at all the peripheral focuses.
>
> (5) Several levels of subordinate focuses may be distinguishable, organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority. The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model, the latter being reduced images of the former. Similar powers are repeated at each level with a decreasing range; every authority has certain recognized powers over the subordinate authorities articulated to it, and formally similar offences differ in significance according to the order to authorities involved in them.
>
> (6) The more peripheral a subordinate authority is the more chance it has to change its allegiance from one power to another. Segmentary states are thus flexible and fluctuating, even comprising peripheral units which have political standing in several adjacent power pyramids which thus become interlocked.[36]

[35] *Alur Society: A Study in Process and Types of Domination*, W. Heffer and Sons Ltd., Cambridge, 1956.

[36] Ibid., pp. 248-9.

Professor Southall's explicitly comparative approach, his efforts to consider political systems other than the Alur in contemporary Africa and in other times, invites further consideration. Special attention may be given to three of the elements of Southall's definition: sovereignty, centralized government, and administrative specialization.

Territorial sovereignty in the unitary state and in the segmentary state is different. In the unitary state, effective political control and administration defines the territory of the state; it also establishes, or constitutes, the quality of sovereignty, that is, the manner in which political authority and political power coincide. While in the unitary state there is likely to be no substantial gap between political control and authority, or what Southall speaks of as 'ritual hegemony', in a segmentary state these two aspects of rule are markedly divergent. Thus Southall, speaking of a segmentary political situation, states: 'ritual supremacy is often accepted where political control is not, and segmentary states may characteristically be more highly centralized ritually than politically.'[37] This affects the nature of central authority as well as of territory, of course, but the implications for the latter are important. If one accepts the validity of the distinction between ritual and political aspects of rule, as one must in order to deal with the concept of the segmentary state as Southall presents it, then it would appear necessary to consider two different notions of 'territory' at a given time for a particular segmentary state. One sense of territory would be the scope of ritual supremacy, the other of political control. This is the distinction upon which Southall appears to base his notion of a 'series of zones'. It is necessary to recognize that in a segmentary state there is a dual or divided idea of territoriality. Whereas in a unitary state this dual sense of territory occurs only when something has gone wrong, in the segmentary state, the fact and legitimacy of this duality is of crucial theoretical and empirical significance.

The dual sense of territorial sovereignty as, on the one hand, an essentially ritual sort exercised by a king in a segmentary state

[37] Ibid., p. 261. In a later statement, Southall seems to modify what is here an apparent equivalence of 'ritual hegemony' and 'authority' by stating that: 'Authority is the legitimate exercise of imperative control (i.e. '. . . the probability that a command will be obeyed'); 'Typology of States and Political Systems' *in* M. Banton (ed), *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, A.S.A. Monographs, no.2 (1969), Tavistock Publications, London, p. 120.

and, on the other hand, as an essentially political or controlling sort which the king exercises in his own domain, but which is appropriately exercised by subordinate rulers in their domains, is seen as appropriate in the medieval Indian situation. The terms *kṣatra* and *rājadharma* in *dharmaśāstra* texts denote the distinction. In the recent work of Lingat,[38] these terms are contrasted in two different ways. First, the terms contrast with respect to the scope of kingly rule: *kṣatra* perceives the king as a fully competent, independent political actor charged, as is the father in the family, with the protection and control of his subjects; *rājadharma* perceives the king as an actor of limited power within an interdependent system of hierarchical relationships, who bears the full moral consequences of his own actions and those of his subjects.[39] The second contrast is more relevant.

> [*Rājadharma*][40] is a universal rule in this sense, that every king is subject to it and suffers its sanctions, whatever the extent or situation of his kingdom. Moreover it is a duty and an obligation of a personal character which is incumbent on the king's conscience and obtains stability only through his will.[41]
>
> *Kṣatra* . . . is a power of a territorial character, exercised within a given territory and stopping at the frontier of the realm. . . . Of the same nature as property, it implies a direct power over the soil. That is why the king is also called *svāmin*, a word which can be applied equally to a proprietor as to a husband or a chief, and which denotes an immediate power over a thing or over a person.[42]

A similar contrast is suggested by Louis Dumont in his discussion of *daṇḍa* and *artha* as elements of what he calls '"conventional"' or ' "rational" ' kingship in India. Dumont contrasts *daṇḍa*, or 'legitimate force', and *artha*, or 'interest. . . at once economic and political . . .', and notes that *daṇḍa*, most abstractly conceived is 'a kind of immanent power of justice . . . more or less identical

[38] Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, trans. with additions by J. Duncan M. Derrett, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973. Originally published in 1967 under the title, *Les sources du droit dans le systeme traditonnel de l'Inde*, Mouton and Co., Paris.

[39] Ibid., pp. 211-12.

[40] *'Dharma'* is used in the original but Lingat noted that 'it is perfectly correct for the Mahābhārata to declare that all *dharmas* are comprised in the *rājā-dharma* and that all have *rāja-dharma* at their head' (ibid., p. 208).

[41] Ibid., p. 212.

[42] Loc. cit.

with *dharma*. . . .'[43] *Dharma* is thus 'action in conformity with the universal norm, and hence disinterested, while *artha* is action in conformity with interest without regard to the universal norm. . . .'[44]

Southall's second characteristic of the segmentary state, 'centralized government', requires clarification. The segmentary state has two kinds of 'centres', or rather, centres exist in two conceptual and empirical senses. As to the first sense, the segmentary state exists as *a* state (and not a congeries of independent political entities) only insofar as the segmentary units comprising it recognize a single ritual authority — the king. It must be this recognition which provides some of the legitimacy for constituent segmentary units — those 'numerous peripheral foci of administration' in the state — which are themselves 'centres' in the second sense. In this connection, it is difficult to understand Southall's suggestion that one difference between segmentary and unitary states (and the factor chiefly involved in the transformation from the former condition to the latter) is the concept of legitimacy.[45] Southall supposes that legitimacy is lacking in the political relationships of the segmentary state. Yet, what else but a 'belief in "'legitimacy"' (to follow Southall in the use of Weber's definition of legitimacy) could explain the efficacy and durability of the Alur state and other systems to which he applied the label, 'segmentary state'. It would seem to be 'legitimacy' alone that can be understood in Southall's statement that 'in a segmentary system tribute is received in direct return for ritual and jural services rather than in recognition of any regular fiscal obligation'.[46] It is a similar sense of legitimacy which Krader presumably has in mind when he states:[47]

> . . . in any segmentary polity, the local chiefs or other authorities do not give their political power to the central ruler; the political power remains in their hands. Nevertheless, a central office may be established in these kingdoms with a symbolic function of representing the unity of the people and the land.

[43] 'The Conception of Kingship in Ancient India' *in* L. Dumont, *Religion/Politics and History in India; Collected Papers in Indian Sociology*, Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1970, p. 76. He contrasts 'conventional' with 'divine', p. 71.

[44] Ibid., p. 78.

[45] Southall, op. cit., p. 252.

[46] Ibid., pp. 261-2.

[47] Lawrence Krader, *Formation of the State* (Foundation of Modern Anthropology Series), Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1968, p. 35.

If legitimacy does not attach to ritual centralization in the segmentary state, Southall's second defining characteristic on centralized government becomes puzzling. For, it appears contradictory to assert that 'there is centralized government' at the same time that there are 'peripheral foci of administration over which the centre exercises limited control'. It may be granted that there are limits to central control in even the most modern, unitary state. However, the distinction which is emphasized in considering the segmentary state is that overarching central *political* control may not be very important at all. This is a very different conception from that of 'centralized government'. In a segmentary state, while political control is appropriately distributed among many throughout the system, ritual supremacy is legitimately conceded to a single centre.

A similar and related question arises in the 'monopoly in the use of force', Southall's fourth characteristic of the segmentary state. Involved here is the same kind of apparent contradiction as that alluded to in the discussion of 'centralized government'. It is difficult to accept that the 'monopoly of the use of force' has been 'successfully claimed' by the centre when the legitimate, even if restricted, use of legitimate force also 'inheres at all peripheral foci'. This is the same as accepting that a centralized government could exist which had almost no political control over parts of the system. These apparent paradoxes are mitigated, if not resolved, in the distinction between political and ritual authority which has already been discussed and in the relationships between centres and their internal subordinate parts, to which attention can now be directed.

Southall's fifth characteristic states in part:

> Several levels of subordinate foci may be distinguished, organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority. The central and peripheral authorities reflect the same model, the latter being a reduced image of the former.

The concept of pyramidal segmentation has the greatest saliency in Southall's formulation; it may be the most distinctive feature of his formulation of the segmentary state, for the conception of pyramidal segmentary organization assumes an upward reaching set of localized units of society, such as peasant families, to the moral centre of society, the king. As used by Durkheim, the principle

of segmentary structure denoted the *horizontal* repetition of like social units at the base of society, units such as clans and lineages, for example. Later anthropological analysis, especially that of Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer of Africa have noted that there was also a form of *vertical* segmentation. Here, the highest segment might be a tribe, or major section of a tribe, beneath which nested what Evans-Pritchard called secondary and perhaps even tertiary sections of the same tribal unit. The lowest level of this segmentary structure might include several villages,[48] and at this level are to be seen many of the characteristics of the tribe itself: a distinctive name, shared bonds of sentiment, and a territory of its own. However, each segment is also internally segmented with oppositions among its parts, Thus, Evans-Pritchard writes, '. . . a tribal segment is crystallized around a lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe. . .'[49] in opposition to which stand other lineages. Further:

> The political system is an expanding series of opposed segments from the relations within the smallest tribal section to inter-tribal and foreign relations, for opposition between the segments of the smallest section seems to us to be of the same structural character as the opposition between the tribe and its neighbours. . . .[50]

The importance of this conception vests in its simultaneous attention to the linkage of social units at various horizontal levels — even very local levels — and the integration of diverse social units at increasingly more comprehensive spatial and societal levels. It is of course recognized that there are profound differences between African societies and those of India, including the far weaker (but not absent) clan and lineage structures at the lowest levels of society in India, and the overarching ideological and ritual integration achieved under Indian conceptions of kingship. But such differences do not alter the essential structural similarities of certain fundamental relationships in these two very different kinds of social orders.

The basic segments of the South Indian medieval segmentary political system were *nadu*s under the leadership of chiefs. In the Chola period, such personages held titles such as *uḍaiyar*, *araśar*,

[48] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, Oxford University Press, New York, reprint 1971, p. 139; cited by Southall, op. cit., p. 249.

[49] Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 142; also pp. 211-14.

[50] Ibid., p. 148.

mummudi, or *mūvendavēḷār*. The dominant basis of opposition of these localized units of society was not that of ethnically or culturally differentiated peoples, as in the case of the Alur described by Southall. In medieval South India opposing elements within the *nadu* units of society were of a different nature, and often asymmetrical. These would include the opposition between families of chiefs and the dominant castes from which they had emerged, between locally dominant landed groups and subordinate ones; between agricultural and non-agricultural groups, between established castes of a locality and newcomers or outsiders, and among sect and cult groups. Many of these oppositions took concrete form in the right and left caste groupings.

Within each *nadu* segment, social units in balanced or complementary opposition may have conceded to a chief a degree of executive authority — political and ritual power — sufficient to satisfy the tasks of governance within a territory, but this was a limited concession. It was limited by the demands of constituent groups within the segment that their separate identities and internal regulation be respected and preserved from usurpation by the power of the chief on the one hand, and from assimilation by other groups, on the other hand.[51] Maintenance of the internal relations among groups within the segmentary unit accomplished more than the limitation of the chief's power; it also militated against pressures from beyond the segmentary unit which might threaten this internal constitution. Thus, preservation of the oppositional structure of groups within a *nadu*, while limiting the chief's authority over the unit, simultaneously strengthened the office of the chief by assuring support to him in protecting the *nadu* from external aggression. Chieftainships of this sort may additionally, though only temporarily, be supported by intra-segmentary cooperation in acts of aggression against others. As long as the disparate interests of groups within the segmentary unit were maintained, the segmentary political order had stability. A segmentary unit under gifted leadership or special circumstances, such a natural catastrophe, may have shifted to the status of a more powerful chiefdom or, on the other hand, it may have yielded to superior force and become integrated into a supralocal, centralized political system. But, neither of these transformations are likely to be

[51] *See* Lingat's discussion of *Dharmaśāstra* on this point; op. cit., pp. 246-8.

either easy or enduring. As long as the subordinate social units preserved the tension of opposition to each other and to the proximate central authority, i.e. the local chieftain, each segmentary unit contributed to the segmentary character of the whole.

Each segment replicates the overall pattern of central and peripheral relationships and at every level there are centres. Southall states:

> The distribution of power in the segmentary state is characterized by the fact that, within any one segment, at any level of the pyramidal structure, there is at any one moment a certain degree of monopoly of political power, development of administrative staff and definition of territorial limits, whereas, within the system as a whole, the political relations of the various segments are determined by much the same factors as in the case of segmentary societies which have no political specialization at all. Such specialized power as exists at the top of the pyramid becomes progressively weaker in proportion to distance from the center, but the degree of power centralization within segments may vary very little from one segment to another within each pyramidal system.[52]

All subordinate centres of a segmentary order are bound together by their joint recognition of the ritual sovereignty of the highest central office or personage considered as the authoritative source of ritual cohesiveness for the state as a whole. What distinguishes centres from each other at various levels of the system is the vertical discontinuity of power relations. Hence, the scope of political control falls upon diminished numbers of persons as one descends from the apex of the segmentary state (the *rāja*) to the base, the local chief (e.g., *uḍaiyar*). But the nature of authority of each centre is the same.

It is essentially this point of many centres in relationship to superior and subordinate levels with which Southall is concerned in his distinction between pyramidal social structures and hierarchical power structures.[53] In the former every legitimate kind of political authority and control can be found at all levels, but these operate upon a diminishing constituency as one moves from level to level. In hierarchical power structures, different kinds of authority and control are appropriate to centres at different levels, and what marks the passage from one to another level is a particular bundle of executive authority and power. That which is 'reduced'

[52] Southall, op. cit., pp. 251-2.
[53] Ibid., pp. 250-1.

in the 'reduced image' of pyramidal levels is the range of competence not the kind of political control.

'Specialized administrative staff', the third basic element of Southall's definition refers to agents of a centralized authority who are the means by which centralized authority and power are articulated. However, in his usage and that of most students of pre-industrialized societies, apart from China, perhaps, the reference is not to specialists of the sort associated with modern, unitary, bureaucratized states. The latter are functional specialists responsible for attending a fractional aspect of central political control such as when a magistrate adjudicates disputed claims according to codified, statutory law. What appears to be meant by 'specialized administrative staff' in Southall's conception of the segmentary state is the existence within a society of persons with distinct political roles in contrast to the fused character of kinship and politics in stateless societies. Moreover, in Southall's formulation, the reference is not to administrative specialists in the sense that a magistrate or a tax collector is one, but, in fact, to a general agent of central authority, a *mantri* in the strict sense of the term.

Considering the very important distinctions in the concept of the segmentary state which are made between ritual and political authority and power on the one hand, and central and segmentary focuses on the other, it would be expected that the administrative personnel — those with clear political roles — are of two kinds. First, there are those who are agents of the central authority's actual political control within the limited sphere of that competence; secondly, there are those who are agents of the central authority's ritual function in binding subordinate authorities together into either subordinate pyramidal segments or state systems comprised of such units. Perceived in these terms, Southall's third characteristic may perhaps be stated as follows:

> Specialized administrative personnel are of two kinds. One is essentially involved in political control, and the scope of their activities may not extend beyond the segmentary unit (recognizing that the segmentary unit of the great chief may be much larger than others). The second kind of administrative personnel is involved in essentially ritual activities and tends to be inter-segmentary in scope.

A partial summary of the clarification and elaboration of South-

all's conception of the 'segmentary state' which have been discussed above may now be offered.[54]

1) In a segmentary state sovereignty is dual. It consists of actual political sovereignty, or control, and what Southall terms 'ritual hegemony' or 'ritual sovereignty'. These correspond in Indian usage to *kṣatra* and *rājadharma* respectively.

2) In a segmentary state there may be numerous 'centres' of which one has primacy as a source of ritual sovereignty, but all exercise actual political control over a part, or segment, of the political system encompassed by the state.

3) The 'specialized adminstrative staff' — what in some unitary states would be called 'the bureaucracy' — is not an exclusive feature of the primary centre, but is found operating at and within the segments of which the state consists.

4) Subordinate levels, or 'zones' of the segmentary state may be distinguished and the organization of these is 'pyramidal'. That is, the relationship between the centre and the peripheral units of any single segment is the same — in reduced form — as the relationship between the prime centre and all peripheral focuses of power. There is a contrast here with hierarchical forms of political organization in which, at successively subordinate levels of a system there are *different* kinds of executive authority whereas in the segmentary state, executive authority is the same at the prime centre and at any subordinate segmental centre except that it is exercised over fewer people. In the Indian context this principle is expressed in the terms 'little kingdoms' and 'little kings' to describe a local ruler whose 'kingly' authority is that of any great king, but more limited in scope.

The principle of pyramidal segmentation — of complementary opposition among segments within an expanding framework of vertical integration — is as salient in the concept of segmentary states as the conceptual bifurcation of the ritual and political aspects of rule. A unitary political order in the process of formation or decay may exhibit these characteristics. However, when the fundamental structure of political relationships is predicated upon the legitimacy of pyramidal segmentation and of the kind of separation of authority and power delineated here, the system is extremely

[54] While there have been discussions between the author and Southall on most of the issues raised here, it is not suggested that the concept of the segmentary state as used here is 'authorized' or 'endorsed' by Southall.

difficult to bring under unitary rule from above or to alter from below because political authority is inextricably tied to opposed, localized segments. Given the pyramidal segmentary form of organization, the only possible supra-local, extra-segmentary integration which could occur would be of a ritual sort. Segmentary social organization may, and often does, occur in stateless societies or in tribal societies; segmentary social organization among peasant peoples, whose dominant form of political organization is the chiefdom, would require some kind of segmentary state with characteristics conforming to those outlined by Southall.

The conception outlined above pertains to the ways in which relatively self-sufficient, enduring, and often quite ancient localized societies can be linked together to form a state. Such a state is not an amalgamation or absorption of localized units into an organic greater unit such as implied in the unitary state, but is an arrangement in which the local units — segments — retain their essential being as segmental parts of a whole. One reason why each of the segmental units remains autonomous is that each is pyramidal, that is, each consists of balanced and opposed internal groupings which zealously cling to their independent identities, privileges and internal governance, and demand that these units be protected by their local rulers.

Another quite different reason for the durability of these arrangements is that rulership — whether that of chieftainship or kingship — is sacral: it is dependent upon ritual, not administrative, incorporation. The very term *rāja* alerts us to the ritually incorporative character of Indian kingship since one meaning of the root, *rāj*, is 'stretching out', 'the king being one who "stretched himself out and protected (other men) under his powerful arms"' as do divine powers (the Vedic Savitar and Agni).[55] Segmentary forms of organization cannot exist except under such ritually incorporative leadership.

Rulership in medieval South India was based upon ancient canons of Aryan kingship. This was true from the Pallava period, when brahmanical kingship was established, modifying the earlier form of kingship described in the *puṟam* poems of the Classical, or Sangam, tradition. While both the earlier and later forms of

[55] J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1966, p. 122; he draws here upon the work of T. Burrow.

rulership — of chief or king — were sacral in character, the form introduced in the Pallava age provided the means for attaining encompassing, incorporative universal kingship. The pre-Pallavan, or Classical, period was one in which three kingships and a great number of chieftainships existed among Tamils; from the Pallava period, the Tamils could have but one great king, one who, by means of ritual, incorporated all lesser rulers. Ritual incorporation was the essence of medieval South Indian kingship, and the introduction of this conception into South India was as politically significant as was the introduction, later, of bureaucracy, by the British, for modern South India.

Ritually incorporative kingship has been neglected by all but a few writers on Indian kingship and the Hindu state. Among the scholars of the Chola period, sacral kingship is entirely ignored. Nilakanta Sastri's discussion of Chola kingship, in *The Cōḷas* and other writings, is concerned with the king as warrior, as the putative director of an elaborate administrative structure, as the benefactor of Brahmans and temples, and as the follower of conventional *rājadharma* in other ways.[56] T.V. Mahalingam's treatment of kingship is more detailed, but not essentially different from that of his mentor, Nilakanta Sastri.[57] Though Mahalingam gives more serious attention to literary and poetic sources than Nilakanta Sastri, he shares the latter's distrust of them. Hence, he considers 'overdrawn' poetic references to the king as mediator between the cosmos and earthly society, such as the following lines from the *Manimekalai*: 'If the king swerved from his righteous path, 'The planets would all change their course. . . .'[58]

Among a few scholars, however, the sacral character of Indian kingship is absolutely central. Two elaborate treatments of the subject are found in J. Gonda's *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View* and A.M. Hocart's *Kings and Councillors*.[59] Gonda's title is somewhat misleading since it is clear that he regards Indian kingship as intelligible *only* from the religious point of view. Thus, while allowing that the view of Kautilya of the 'practical

[56] Op. cit., pp. 460 ff.

[57] *South Indian Polity*, pp. 11 ff.

[58] Ibid., p. 15.

[59] Gonda, op. cit., and A.M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors; An Essay in the Comparative Anatomy of Human Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1970, p. 197; originally published in Cairo, 1936.

side of Indian public life as opposed to the religious' was important in recognizing the king to be the 'central figure of the state', he concludes his disquisition with the observation that the social order which the king was bound to nourish and sustain was prior to the state.[60] As protector of this social order and its people, the king possessed 'a morality of his own'.[61] The major thrust of Gonda's essay is the sacrificially attained divinity of the Indian king. Created from 'eternal and essential particles of Indra and the seven other great *dēva*s the king is one of the *lokapāla*s (guardians of the world) according to Manu and later writers.[62] The Vedic *ratnin*s, seen by many historians as an 'administrative council' of the ancient Indian king, are better seen, according to Gonda and his student Heesterman, as a group of persons endowed with 'sacral qualities' which are incorporated by the king in a marriage-like ritual.[63] The king as married to his realm or to the goddesses of fortune, victory, and the earth are figures of speech frequently found in royal inscriptions of medieval India.[64] As gods are honoured by man, so are kings because of the latters' anointment in the *mahā-bhiśekha* which consecrates (i.e., ritually transforms) each human king just as it did the primordial divine king, Indra.[65] Sacrificially created power is thereafter passed through the king as in the *aśva-mēdha* sacrifices. Gonda points out that the royal horse sacrifice does not merely assert ownership over the territory circumambulated by the king's sacrificial horse; the horse transmits to that territory its divine power acquired as a result of ritual.[66] The horse sacrifice is repeated each year by the royal sacrificer and hence becomes a cycle of sacrificial regeneration of the land and its people.

Hocart provides the most general conception of incorporative

[60] Gonda, op. cit., pp. 137-8. Elsewhere (p. 103): 'It is therefore no happy idea sharply to distinguish between the religious and secular aspects of kingship, the former requiring from the monarch certain acts of propitiating gods and unseen powers . . . with the help of the purohita and sacrificial priests, the latter including acts that lead to prosperity of realm and subjects.'

[61] Ibid., p. 138.

[62] Ibid., pp. 24-30.

[63] Gonda, op. cit., p. 44; J.C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration's*, Mouton and Co., s-Gravenhage, 1957, p. 52.

[64] Lingat, op. cit., p. 212 and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 35 In.

[65] Gonda, op. cit., pp. 56, 82-3.

[66] Ibid., pp. 110-14.

kingship in which the ancient Indian monarchical tradition is but one example. Sacrifice is the central means by which the king is made sacred and is the means by which all other elements of the realm are incorporated and controlled: lesser kings and chiefs, and their territories; other gods and their priests. E.W. Hopkins' view of Indian sacral kingship deserves special mention, for he introduces a dynamic element missing from the conceptions outlined above. Hopkins notes that the concept of divine kingship is at the foundation of all ancient Indian texts dealing with governance.[67] His contrast of the Brahman and the king in later Vedic thought is instructive: the Brahman is 'born divine. . . a king becomes divine only by virtue of a religious ritual' regardless of his birth as a Kshatriya.[68] This conception, Hopkins states, is found in many later law texts (*dharmaśāstras*). Thus, Kautilya speaks of the anointed king as one to be honoured and obeyed as a god, and Manu goes even further to equate the anointed king not only with Indra — king of the Vedic gods, but with seven other great gods who protect the world (gods of the sun, moon, fire, wind, wealth, judgement or Varuna, and death).[69] Later, epic poets speak of five rather than eight divine protectors of the world, including the king, and epic poets 'never say that the king is *like* a great divinity. . . the king *is* a great divinity; he is like this or that god'.[70]

Epic poets also introduced a new element into the notion of sacred kingship, that of 'divine incarnation'. Thus, of the first king, Prthu, Hopkins states: 'Viṣṇu entered his body, and so the world bows to this king as to a god among human gods.'[71] The *āvatār* form of incarnation provided the means of assimilating Rama and Krishna to Vishnu as human forms of the god, and provides a conceptual model for the sacral transformation of human kings to divinity in medieval South Indian kingship.[72]

Dharmaśāstra texts extend the temporal range of sources on sacral kingship to the period of the Cholas.[73] Lingat has noted that

[67] 'The Divinity of Kings', *JAOS*, v. 50 (1931), p. 309.
[68] Loc. cit.
[69] Ibid., p. 311.
[70] Ibid., p. 313.
[71] Ibid., p. 313.
[72] Ibid., p. 314; and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 337.
[73] J. Duncan M. Derrett has drawn attention to this fact in his 'Two Inscriptions Concerning the Status of Kammālas and the Application of the Dharmasāstra',

while many of the sastric texts on *dharma* speak of the divinity of kings, the idea is rarely encountered in the earlier *dharmasūtras*; he also notes a difference in the way this divine aspect of kingship is perceived in early, Vedic, texts and later, *dharmaśāstra*, texts. Vedic texts attribute divinity to kings because of their participation in ritual which identified the king with a god; this is well illustrated in Gonda's discussion, of course. The same sense of sacred kingship is conveyed in the meaning attached to the terms *rāja* and *rājyam* in Vedic usage, that is the idea of the 'splendor, magnificence and prestige' of the king 'rather than his power to command and the idea of power and force'.[74] But, Lingat argues, by the time of the *dharmasāstras* of Manu and Narada, the divinity of kings is posited on other grounds, namely as a reason for obedience to royal orders. It is, therefore, the institution, not the royal person, which is deified.

> The dominant idea of the *dharmasāstra* writers seems to have been that it was not the king who had a divine nature, but the royal function itself. . . .[75] The exercise of the royal function is equivalent to the celebration of a sacrifice of long duration (*sattra*), and that is why the king remains pure, whatever acts he is led to commit. . . .[76]

An interesting and corrolary conception which Lingat finds in his study of *dharmaśāstra* is that the social origin of kings is not considered important; it matters only that the king has been anointed (*abhiśikta*) and that he is an able warrior. Kshatriya birth is insisted upon by Manu,[77] but most other *dharamaśāstras* do not. Kulluka, a Bengal *sastrika* of the late twelfth century, attributes the title of *rāja* to any man duly anointed and affording royal protection, regardless of his *varṇa*.[78]

Notwithstanding the various aspects of sacral kingship which Lingat has evinced, his summary judgement of the conception of kingship in the medieval *dharmaśāstra* tradition is puzzling in its emphasis upon the secular:

in *Prof. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri 80th Birthday Felicitation Volume*, Madras, 1971; a brief on this appears in Lingat, op. cit., pp. 273-4.

[74] Lingat, op. cit., p. 211 n.

[75] Ibid., p. 208. He notes that this conception has been the subject of heated controversy among scholars.

[76] Ibid., p. 215.

[77] Ibid., p. 209.

[78] Ibid., p. 210; also *see* Kane, op. cit., v. 1, pt 2, pp. 756-9.

> . . . the king appears to owe his authority neither to divine will, nor to his birth, nor to any social compact, but solely to the force at his disposal. . . . . His authority is entirely temporal and secular. Punishment is the sole instrument of his policies. But like any mortal, he has his own dharma. . . [and] though he is an absolute sovereign, he is subject to the law of *karma*. . . .[79]

What Lingat appears to mean here is that for the *dharmaśāstra* writers, the possession of force, which alone provides the eligibility for kingship, is made perfect as *daṇḍa*: pure force which becomes a divine institution of punishment for the welfare of all.[80] Perfection of that force can only occur with proper anointment, and this creates the royal function; secular force is *daṇḍa* only as it is embedded in the extended sacrifice (*sattra*) which kingship is construed to be. During this time, the king is freed from the consequences of sin or error, though in his after-life he is as fully accountable for both as any person. This *dharmaśāstra* conception of kingship is certainly different from the conception conveyed in Vedic texts upon which Gonda, Hocart, and Hopkins primarily depended, but the effect of this *dharmaśāstra* view is not to diminish, but rather to amplify and elaborate the notion of sacral kingship. It is to be excepted that the concept of royal authority in these *smṛiti* texts, based as they are upon Vedic *śruti* sources as revealed in the commentaries of learned Brahmans, would tend to yield little more to kings than the responsibility and the attendant force (*daṇḍa*) to compel obedience by the king to the instructions of the Brahman lawgivers. One consequence of this was the depersonalization of kingship by emphasizing the royal function and making of it an extended sacrifice[81], thus conferring contingent divinity upon the king as agent. But this can be hardly said to diminish the sacral attributes of medieval kings; it seems rather to augment them.

Two quite different kinds of formulations — the pyramidally segmentary state and sacral kingship — have been presented here to provide the basis for a better understanding of the medieval political system of South India and for a better explanation of

[79] Loc. cit..

[80] Ibid., p. 214.

[81] Gonda too (op. cit., p. 15) remarks on Manu's conception of the extended sacrifice of which kingship is supposed to consist as a necessary condition freeing the king from *āśanca*, or impurity and the consequent restriction from the performance of religious acts.

political evidence from that period. These apparently disparate formulations are held to comprise a complex, unified conception of the South Indian states of the time. Neither formulation alone can be considered adequate even though many scholars might agree that all medieval Indian states were segmentary and many might also recognize that the Hindu conception of monarchy was essentially sacred in the sense that kings were created by ritual and maintained through the moral authority engendered by ritual. The incompleteness of the former conception stems from obvious differences between African societies, analyses of which produced the concept of pyramidal segmentation, and those of India. Crucial here is the differential importance of clan/lineage organization in African and Indian varieties as well as differences in the degree of elaboration, complexity, and pervasiveness of ideas pertaining to kingship and society in India and Africa. The sacral kingly conception is not less incomplete, for the means by which India's sacred kings actually ruled territories as vast as that of the Chola state can hardly be fitted to the modest scale implied in the discussions of those who have, quite rightly, spoken of sacral kingship in India (i.e., Gonda, Hocart, Heesterman, and Hopkins). It is only as these formulations of pyramidal segmentation and sacral kingship are brought together that a single cogent model of state formation and statecraft can be realized.

The concepts of pyramidal segmentation and sacral kingship both imply a political system of fluidity and indeterminacy which may offend our modern notions of states as fixed and certain entities. Yet, it is precisely the fluid and indeterminate — or what Southall called the 'fragile' — character of medieval Indian states which most clearly strikes all who study them. Boundaries are often vague and shifting as are capitals. Gaps and bends in the royal line frequently occur. Great states are reduced to minor ones kaleidoscopically. The reach of royal intervention is at times astonishing as when a great king personally sets aright the ritual arrangements at some small temple very distant from his capital. For some scholars, this is evidence not only of a centralized state, but of one in which the king is its most active agent! Most of the time, however, the king is not only a distant figure, but one of such god-like majesty or fierce war-like mien as to make him an utterly improbable agent for the resolution of minor, local problems. A sacred king does possess all of these attributes: he is a

god; he is a great warrior; he is responsible for order and prosperity throughout his realm of however great an extent that may be; he is the personification of divine energy (*śakti*) which is without limit. But it is in being all of this that makes for difficulty in grasping the political system as something other than a stage for the enactment of a sacred drama.

There are elements of a more fixed and certain nature in the medieval South Indian state, and they are combined as a state only in that they are incorporated under a king's energetic protection of the world, his realm. In Chola times these elements existed concretely at the level of the *nadu*. Here there were villages under the control of assemblies (*ur*s) of the dominant cultivating groups of the locality corporately known as *nattar*s; here there were trade settlements, *nagaram*s under the control of local merchant groups; here, finally, were chiefs who, from the time of the Pallava king Nandivarman II, Pallavamalla (A.D. 731-96), were honoured in royal inscriptions as the protectors of a locality, 'little kings' who were 'married' to the *nadu* realm just as kings were 'married' to their royal realm.

The *nadu* was not a sealed world, nor was it a seamless one. Most of the constituent elements within a *nadu* had connections beyond its borders which were activated on occasion: the *nattar* to other *nattar* groups with whom, by the twelfth century, they cooperated on an almost continuous basis as the *periyanāttār*; merchants of the *nagaram* with other locality merchant groups and with the itinerant merchant groups of the southern peninsula; Brahmans with other *brahmadeya*s and with sacred centres; and chiefs with others like themselves serving in the armies of the kings to defend the kingdom or to seize booty or to add to the lustre of their king by wars with other kingdoms. These relationships between *nadu* groups and other like groups in other *nadu*s are one significant aspect of the pyramidal articulation of segments in Chola society, a massing of an ascending order that reached the royal centre of the state.

But, equally significant and characteristic of pyramidal segmentation were the segmental divisions within each *nadu*. All of the elements mentioned above plus the dual division of right and left lower castes constituted integral units in their own right, and ultimately, maintaining the integrity of each and all, was the responsibility of local chiefs and, finally, the king.

Above all else, the two formulations joined together in this discussion serve to focus attention on the matter of chieftainship. In Chola historiography, the institution of chieftainship is virtually ignored, a victim of the centralist-bureaucratic bias of Nilakanta Sastri and others. Thus, the institution does not appear in the sections of *The Colas* devoted to the Chola system of government. However, in every one of the chapters of this important work, there are numerous references to houses of chiefs with whom the Chola kings interacted, at times as enemies, but often as supporters, in which case chiefs are called 'officials' or 'feudatories'. The same lapse appears in Mahalingam's *South Indian Polity*.

Chieftainship of various kinds existed during the Chola period and later. Some of these were great houses of chiefs which on occasion produced a warrior leader of such ability as to break the surface of obscurity to which most such personages are consigned in the inscriptions of the time. In the time of Parantaka I (A.D. 907-55) the Paluvettaraiyan chiefs of modern Tiruchirapalli district attained sufficient prominence to give a bride to the royal family,[82] and during the time of Rajaraja I, descendants of this line of chiefs built temples in imitation of the Chola king.[83] When Rajendra I faced a serious threat in the conquered regions of Pandya and Chera (Kerala) countries in the late years of his reign, one of his opponents was a chief of Iramkudam.[84] Among Rajendra's most dependable supporters was the Vallavaraiyar chief of modern Salem district; a *nadu* there was named after this family.[85] And, in the northern portions of the Chola overlordship, in modern Coorg and Karnataka, two distinguished families of chiefs held sway as Chola supporters: the Cangavalvas and the Kongavalvas.[86] Again, in the time of Kulottunga I, major support to the royal fortunes came from the Kadava chieftains who claimed connection with the ancient Pallavas and were centred in modern South Arcot.[87] Finally, in the troubled reigns of Rajadhiraja II and Kulottunga III, of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, numerous lines of chiefs are mentioned; indeed, it is the prominence

[82] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 187.
[83] Ibid., p. 187.
[84] Ibid., p. 221.
[85] Ibid., p. 226
[86] Ibid., p. 227.
[87] Ibid., pp. 349-50.

of these cheiftains at the time, which is seen as having contributed decisively to the decline of the dynasty.[88]

Such great chieftains are most often assimilated to Chola polity as 'officials', a term suggesting that these powerful persons owed their political existences to positions in the Chola government. But, the evidence presented by Nilakanta Sastri and others quite belies this. Great chiefs and lesser chiefs, the latter often designated by the title *adigāri* (and thus identified by Nilakanta Sastri as 'officials of the government')[89] or the title *mūvendavēḷār* (a chief whose family served the three kings: Chola, Chera, and Pandya) were fully independent local rulers. Nilakanta Sastri cites a commentary on the twelfth century poem of Ottakuttan, the *Takkayagapparani*, regarding the pretentions of chiefs to entitlement to all of the honours of kingship except the crown itself.[90] He calls this a 'quaint account', but it is quite mistaken to trivialize claims of chiefs of this sort. For such claims to authority have the same nature as fully royal ones; they derive from the same ideology of rule.

Chieftains, just as kings during the medieval period of South Indian history, possessed the attributes of *kṣatra* and *dharma*. *Kṣatra*, the power to command and possess resources, inhered in the chiefs by virtue of their connection with dominant agricultural groups whose leaders they were. Along with this went political control within the territory of chiefs and the ability to amass resources from all within the locality, whether these were in money, in kind, or in service. *Kṣatra* for chiefs as well as kings was a claim to resources based upon force; in this case, as with kings, *kṣatra* implied a set of reciprocal relationships—one might say contractual relationships — between the chief and the various groups within his realm: in return for protection from the chief, resources were given. As with kings, so with chiefs, this force became an entitlement, or was purified, by dharma which meant the pooling of resources and their redistribution. Dharma was appropriately claimed and realized through the redistributional nexus within the territory of the chief; at the centre of this stood the chief. The clearest and most persistent forms of dharmic activities of great and minor chiefs were religious. The alienation of income from

[88] Ibid., pp. 388, 400-7.
[89] Ibid., p. 513.
[90] Ibid., p. 463.

established agrarian settlements to Brahmans and to temples was an expression of the dharmic, *yajamāna*, function, and the ceremonies which accompanied such grants symbolically enacted the moral and dharmic unity of the chiefs, territory just as similar grants and ceremonies involving kings enacted the unity of the kingdom as a whole.

III

Three levels of structure must be identified in the South Indian segmentary state system. Taking the macro region as a whole during and shortly after the period of Chola ascendency, the three levels of structure, or 'zones', to use Southall's term, are: the central zone of the Chola segmentary state, Cholamandalam; three intermediate zones of which Tondaimandalam and Pandimandalam were most important, and Naduvil-nadu, less important;[91] and the peripheral zones of Kongu and Gangavadi. Each of these zones, in turn, can be further differentiated into central, intermediate, and peripheral areas according to the types of *nadu*s which are found, as already suggested in Chapter III. (See Map VII-1.)

Chola country in the Kaveri basin, the central zone of the Chola segmentary state, was called, Cholanadu, until the early eleventh century when Rajaraja I adopted the designation *mandalam* for this territory as well as for other major zones of the Chola state.[92] At about the same time, Tondainadu became Jayankondacholamandalam and Pandinadu became Rajarajamandalam. Bounded by the northern and southern Vellaru rivers according to references in Classical works as well as those of the Chola period, the core of Chola country was the Kaveri river along its east-west traverse to the sea. Where the Kaveri changes from its north-south course to its east-west graded movement to the sea, to the west of what was called *maḷa-nāḍu*, Kongu country began.[93]

Prior to about A.D. 1000, inscriptions refer to 'eighteen' established localities (*nadu*s) comprising Cholanadu. These were concentrated in the riverine core area of the territory, the northern, central

[91] Other names for this territory are *nāḍu-nāḍu* and *nāḍuvu-nāḍu*.

[92] The earliest reference to *cōḷamaṇḍalam* came in A.D. 1009; *A.R.E.*, 1922, no.22.

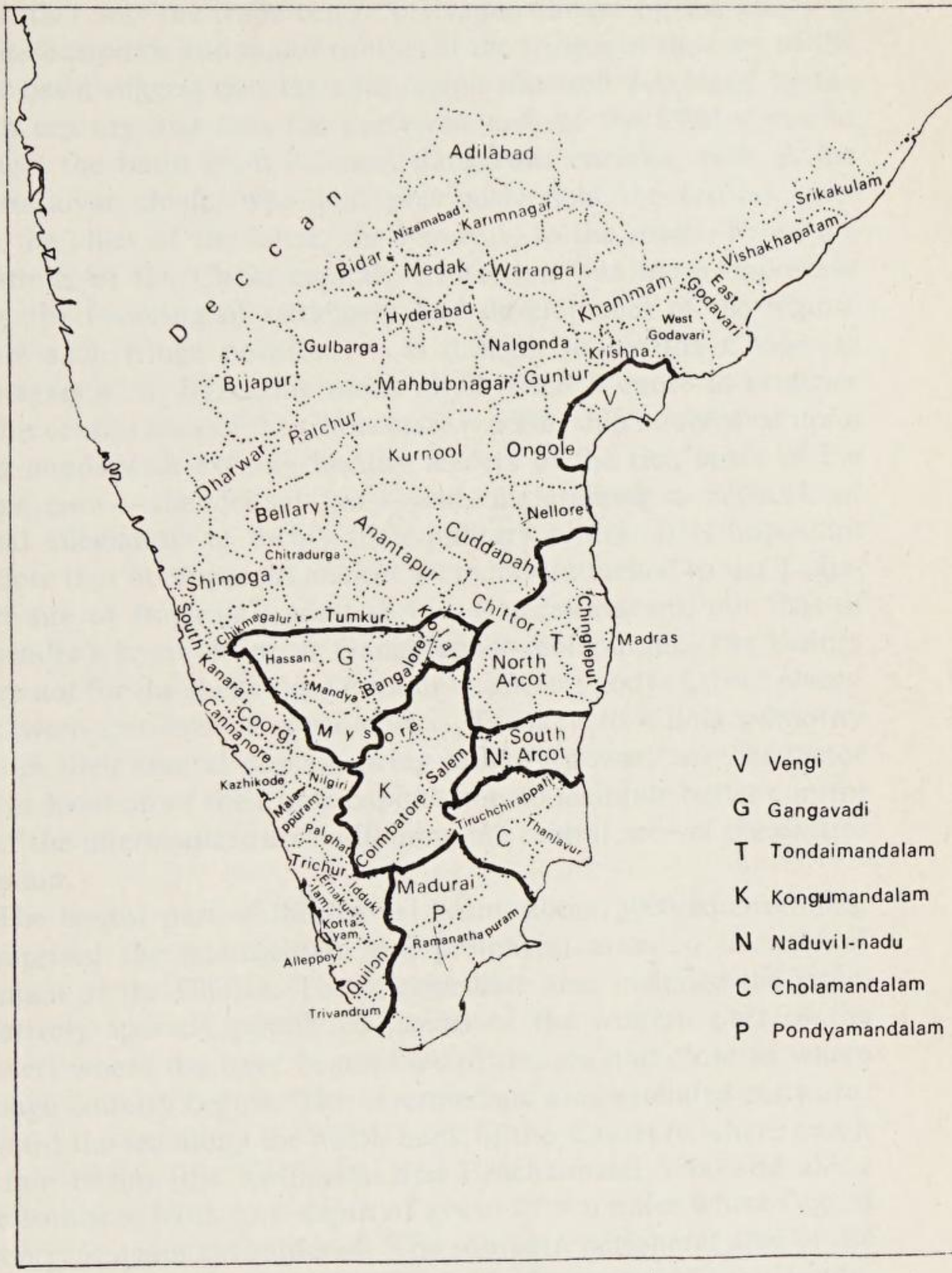
[93] K. Vaidyanathan, 'Ancient Geographical Divisions of Tamil Nadu', op. cit., p. 234; also his, 'Mala-Nādu', *QJMS* (Culture and Heritage Number), pp. 225-60.

and western portions of modern Tanjavur district, and are referred to in inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries with the indication that they were either on the north bank of the Kaveri or the south bank (*vaḍakarai* or *teṉkarai*). To this perhaps conventionally designated ancient core were added about 120 more *nadu*s belonging to Chola country by A.D. 1300. As argued above, these additional localities represent not newly established areas of settlement in most cases, but more probably the inclusion of previously settled places under the expanding overlordship of the Cholas.[94] By the fourteenth century, there were well over a thousand villages in this overall territory of some 8500 square miles whose deltaic core comprised about 3000 square miles.[95]

The deltaic portion of Cholamandalam can be designated the central area of the central domain of the Chola segmentary state. It was here that the power of the kings from Rajaraja I to Kulottunga I was concentrated; this was their *nadu*; they were the leaders of its *nattar*. Curiously, however, it is difficult to locate the seat of Chola power within this deltaic core. Vijayalaya, the founder of the great Chola line, established Tanjavur (then, Tanjapuri) as his capital in the middle of the ninth century, and this continued to be the fortified centre of the Chola overlords through the time of Rajaraja I. Rajendra I shifted the capital to Gangaikondacholapuram on the northern bank of the Kollidam, about thirty-five miles north-west of Rajaraja's capital. In both cases, the selection of the major centre of government may have been in part dictated by strategic considerations related to the protection of the riverine source of wealth to all of the central zone. Two other places also appear to have been especially important for the Cholas. One was near the western fringe of the old delta, Uraiyur (near modern

[94] Subbarayalu lists the earliest *nadu*s as the following: Arvalakurram (Mannargudi taluk, Tanjavur), Avur-k. (Kumbakonam/Papanasam t.), Ingan-nadu (Nannilam/Tanjavur t.), Innambar-n. (Kumbakonam/Papanasam t.), Kilar-k. (Papanasam/Tanjavur t.), Kulamangalam-n. (Alangudi/Kalattur t.), Manni-n. (Kumbakonam t.), Pambuni-k. (Mannargudi t.), Panaiyur-n. (Nannilam t.), Poygai-n. (Tanjavur and Lalgudi/Udaiyarpalam t., Tiruchirapalli), Poyyil-k. (Tanjavur t.), Purangarembai-n. (Mannargudi t.), Tirunaraiyur-n. (Kumbakonam t.), Tiruvali-n. (Shiyali t.), Tiruvalandur-n. (Mayuram.t.), Tiruarur-k. (Nagapattanam t.), Tiruvindalur-n. (Mayuram t.), Uraiyur-k (Tiruchirapalli/Kulittalai t.); p. 18, (Appendix 1).

[95] Ibid., p. 31.



VII-1 The Chola Macro Region *c.* A.D. 1300

Tiruchirapalli), from whence the Cholas apparently originated.[96] The other was the trade centre of Nagapatanam on the sea.

These capitals and major centres at the fringes of the core of the river basin suggest that the core region was well developed by the tenth century and that the perceived task of the Cholas was to protect the basin from its most dangerous enemies, such as the Muttaraiyar chiefs, who had previously held the central core, and the allies of the latter, the Pandyas, to the south. From the locations of the Chola capitals, protection was more important than the fostering of settlement and development of the region. From such fringe positions, it is difficult to see the Cholas as managers of a 'Byzantine monarchy'! What is more in evidence in this central area of the Chola state is a kingship established upon firm bonds with existing locality leaders of the rich lands of the inner core — the deltaic fan — and, maintaining a network of ritual allegiances to fortify their military power. It is important to note that no apparent ancient sacredness attached to the Tanjapuri site of Rajaraja's great shrine, Rajarajesvaram, nor that of Rajendra's royal shrine at Gangaikondacholapuram. The shrines were not for the shelter and honour of ancient gods of these places, but were symbols of royal power. The key to Chola authority within their central domain being military power, another factor in the location of the Chola capitals was to facilitate better control over the intermediate area adjoining the central area of the central domain.

The largest part of the Kaveri basin, about 5000 square miles, comprised the intermediate and peripheral areas of the central domain of the Cholas. The intermediate area included the large, relatively sparsely populated, *nadu*s of the western part of the Kaveri where the river bends toward the sea and close to where Kongu country begins. This intermediate area extended eastward, toward the sea along the north bank of the Kaveri to where rough terrain begins (the Kollimalai and Panchaimalai hills) and along the southern bank to a depth of about fifteen miles where rugged country is again encountered. The southern peripheral area of the central zone was known as Konadu, Jayansingakula-valanadu, and Rajaraja-valanadu which formed part of the modern Pudukkottai state whose core was the southern Vellaru river, the traditional southern boundary of Chola country. To the north of the

[96] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 110.

Kaveri, the area between the Kollidam and the northern Vellaru rivers constituted another peripheral area of Chola country. Naduvil-nadu, beyond the northern Vellaru and west of the narrow coastal plain at this point, may thus be considered an independent zone between Chola and Tondai countries.

Chola control over the Kaveri core began with the founder's — Vijayalaya — displacement of the Muttaraiyar chiefs from Tanjapuri and his successful defence against the Pandyan leader Varagunavarman. Aditya Chola, who succeeded Vijayalaya and ruled from A.D. 871-907, was similarly successful against the Pallava overlord Aparajita who sought to re-establish an earlier Pallava overlordship in the Kaveri. It is to be recognized that the Pallavas were the first South Indian dynasty to establish a kingship incorporating the many locality chieftainships of the macro region and to use ritual authority as the basis of their authority. But, outside the Pallava heartland of Tondaimandalam, this accomplishment was short-lived, soon to be displaced by the Kaveri-based Cholas.

The Pallavas having been repulsed from the Kaveri, Aditya even succeeded in securing a Chola foothold in Tondaimandalam by A.D. 890 as well as in Kongu country by the end of his reign.[97] Parantaka I, in the first half of the tenth century, pressed the Chola hegemony in several directions. In a series of raids into Pandya country, the Cholas established what was to be a long and difficult presence in the southern peninsula and Sri Lanka. Chola warriors also raided and subordinated some of the great and ancient chiefs on the northern fringe of Tondaimandalam. In these military activities, Parantaka had the collaboration of other chiefs formerly under Pandyan overlordship, especially the Irukkuvels of Kodumbalur in Konadu, whose territory on the southern Vellaru sat uneasily between Pandya and Chola countries. Such chieftains allied to the Cholas gained in their association with Chola expansion. The Konadu chiefs, for example, established themselves as almost independent kings in Kongu for several centuries.[98] Other ancient families of chiefs — Banas and Vaidambas in northern Tondaimandalam — who had recognized the overlordship of the Rashtrakutas of the Bombay-Karnatak, were sharply reduced in influence.

Rashtrakuta power, under Krishna III, brought an end to this

[97] Ibid., pp. 112-13.

[98] *E.I.*, v. 30, no.19, 'Seven vatteluttu Inscriptions from the Kongu Country', ed. K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, pp. 95-112.

phase of Chola expansion. Krishna's inscriptions in Tondaimandalam for almost thirty-five years — A.D. 945-70 — are eloquent testimony of the resistence to the Chola bid to replace Pallava influence in the central Tamil plain.[99] Under Rajaraja I, the issue of whether the central and northern Tamil plain was to be a peripheral zone of Rashtrakuta (or Deccan) influence, through the intermediate zone of Gangavadi under the agency of Ganga chiefs like Butaga, or an intermediate zone of Kaveri influence was finally settled in favour of the Cholas.[100] Notwithstanding the setback of Chola power of Tondaimandalam by Krishna III, the decisive sign of Chola influence in the central and northern Tamil plain — the first of such influence by them — came in the time of Parantaka I. His inscriptions relating to the autonomy of *brahmadeya*s in Tondaimandalam both date and help to define this important part of the Chola segmentary state.

Tondaimandalam and Pandimandalam were the two intermediate zones of the Chola state. Each possessed its own central area: the Palar basin with Kanchi, the Vaigai basin with Madurai; in each there was an established tradition of kingship, and, in the case of the Pandyas, one as ancient as that of the Chola. Each of these intermediate zones of the Chola state also had its own intermediate and peripheral areas with distinctive qualities of their own.

Except for Sathianathaier,[101] none who have written on the Chola period have adequately recognized the extent of the differences between Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam in the time of the great Cholas. It is not necessary to accept his argument that the distinctiveness of Tondaimandalam derived from its having been included in the empire of Ashoka, for he does not, and cannot, suggest why that, if true, might have been important. However, the significance that he attributes to the fact that Buddhism had a longer life in Tondaimandalam than elsewhere in the Tamil plain appears more cogent.[102] These pre-Pallavan developments are difficult to assess. But, with the establishment of Pallava power at Kanchi, the distinctiveness of Tondaimandalam emerges clearly. According to Sathianathaier, the Pallavas of Kanchi were

[99] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan*, I, pp. 55, 226-31.
[100] Ibid., p. 54.
[101] R. Sathianathaier, *Studies in the Ancient History of Tondamandalam*.
[102] Ibid., pp. 1-26.

responsible for the establishment of *brahmadeya*s, those large, populous settlements under the regulation of an assembly of Brahmans (*mahāsabha*). It is his contention that this institution — to which he attributes great importance in the determination of the quality of Pallavan culture — was first developed in Tondaimandalam and that during Pallava times, the eighth to the tenth centuries, most of the records of *mahasabha*s come from villages in Tondaimandalam.[103] The late eighth century records of Dantivarman Pallava, both Sathianathaier and Nilakanta Sastri agree, show the first development of the committee (*vāriyam*) system which was characteristic of the governance system of these villages in the Chola period.

Whether, as Sathianathaier asserts, the classical *brahmadeya* was first developed in Tondaimandalam, or whether the development of *brahmadeya*s occurred at the same time in both the central and southern parts of the Tamil plain, perhaps even in Venadu (modern Kerala), it is clear that Tondaimandalam was a major region for the concentration of these institutions. In contrast to both Cholamandalam and Tondaimandalam in which there are a large number of *brahmadeya* inscriptions dating from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, the other parts of the Tamil region provided many fewer.[104] This analysis of Sathianathaier is based upon fifty *brahmadeya*s which yield four or more *mahasabha* inscriptions for the five centuries as of about 1940. Map IV-1 locates *brahmadeyas* mentioned in one or more inscriptions and covers the period of epigraphic activity to the middle 1960s. This map shows a markedly different pattern from that discovered by Sathianathaier; more than three times as many *brahmadeya*s are located in Chola country than in Tondaimandalam.[105] Since the problems of locating with certainty those modern villages which were previously Brahman centres are no greater in one of the plains regions

[103] Ibid., p. 27. He notes seventeen places where *mahasabha* inscriptions of the Pallavas have been discovered. Of these seven were in Chingleput, six in North Arcot and Chittoor, one from Tanjavur, one from South Arcot, and two from Tiruchirapalli.

[104] Sathianathaier's totals for the period are: Tondaimandalam, 307; Cholamandalam, 300; Pandyamandalam, 25; Kongumandalam, 14; total, 646.

[105] Cholamandalam (Tanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, and the Chidambaram taluk of South Arcot): 223; Tondaimandalam (Chittoor, Chingleput, North Arcot, and most of South Arcot): 83; Pandyamandalam (Madurai and Tirunelvelli): 42; Kongumandalam: 9.

than the other, it is necessary to conclude that Sathianathaier's notion about the primacy of Tondaimandalam in relation to these settlements is incorrect, or, at least, questionable.

Other issues raised by him to account for the alleged primacy of Tondaimandalam in the matter of the distinctive Brahman village are less easily evaluated. The seventh century Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsüan Tsang is read by Sathianathaier to indicate that Buddhist institutions continued to survive, if not to thrive, in the central Tamil plain after they had declined in the Kistna-Godavari and Kaveri deltas and elsewhere.[106] Also, Hsüan Tsang is understood to suggest that there was at Kanchi as great a centre of Buddhist learning as at Nalanda. Jaina learned men are also reported to have been important here. Noting that the Pallava records of the middle of the ninth century from Bahur (modern Pondicherry) refer to centres of higher Brahmanical learning (*vidyāsthānas*), Sathianathaier is led to conclude that the factors responsible for Buddhist survivals in Tondaimandalam also account for later 'local self-government and . . . higher education'.[107] Thus, he argues that the significance of Brahman centres in Tondaimandalam, committed to learning as well as to the propagation of resurgent Vedic religion, were a direct outgrowth of the previous importance of Buddhist and Jaina intellectual and religious activities against which the subsequent enthusiastic sponsorship of Brahmanical learning and religion by the Pallavas of the Simhavishnu line were directed.

Difficult though it may be to assess these factors presumed to be important in explaining the alleged primacy of Tondaimandalam in the provenance and the number of *brahmadeya*s, one must agree with Sathianathaier — and all historians do — that this institution was of the greatest importance in the preservation and dissemination of Brahmanical knowledge and religion. One must, moreover, agree that Tondaimandalam saw the early, if not the earliest, development of this institution, though it is not the case that the number of *brahmadeya*s in Tondaimandalam and Cholamandalam was so nearly equal as Sathianathaier argues. The concentration of Brahmans and those settlements which they controlled appears to have been much greater in the Kaveri core than in the central plain. Moreover, if it is granted, as an explanation of the signifi-

[106] Ibid., pp. 23-6.
[107] Ibid., pp. 26, 50-1.

cance of *brahmadeya*s there, that the persistence of Buddhist and Jaina influence in Tondaimandalam was greater than elsewhere, we have no way of ascertaining why this should have been so. Why did Buddhism and Jainism flourish in Tondaimandalam for a longer time?

The answers suggested are not final. One factor in the persistence of 'heterodox' faiths was the city of Kanchi. As a major trade centre strategically sited on the principal route between the two deltaic regions of the Kistna-Godavari and Kaveri population centres, with good access to the interior upland behind the plain as well as an opening to sea-born coastal and long-distance trade, Kanchi is recorded in early Chinese sources. Trade centres near Kanchi (e.g. Markanam) are also mentioned in the *Periplus*.[108] This evidence of the ancient economic significance of Kanchi is bolstered by what may have been an important association of artisan-traders with the place. In later times, Kanchi was a prime centre of artisans of the left-hand castes (*idaṉgai*).[109] Oppert and Mclean, writing in the late nineteenth century believed that the left-hand division of castes at Kanchi harked back to an ancient association of these merchants and craftsmen with Jainism in a manner similar to the association of merchants with Buddhism.[110]

Another factor which must be considered is that even beyond the support of Buddhism and Jainism by merchants and artisans — a pan-Indian phenomenon of antiquity — there is reason to suppose that these two faiths may have enjoyed wide, general acceptance among peasant folk of the Palar-Cheyaru basin core of the Kanchi region. This is suggested by the facts that relatively few Saivite *bhakti* hymnists (*nāyanār*s) are identified with Tondaimandalam and that there are relatively few sites sacred to these hymnists in this area as compared to the Kaveri. Of the sixty-three Saivite saints traditionally honoured (assimilating the Jaina conception of sixty-three 'great souls'), only six were of Tondaimandalam as

[108] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Foreign Notices . . .*, pp. 4, 45 from Pan Kuo of the first century A.D.; 'Periplus Maris Erythraei' (*in* R.C. Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 307) where three ports on this section of the Coromandel coast are named: Camara, Poduca and Sopatma.

[109] Maclean, *Manual of Madras Administration*, v. 3, p. 1037.

[110] Maclean, ibid., and G. Oppert (*Original Inhabitants of Bharatavarsa . . .*, p. 62), who notes that at the temple centre of Melkote, there was a special hall and other facilities for castes of the left-hand.

against most of the rest who were of the Kaveri area.[111] Moreover, of the 279 sacred places referred to in the Saivite hymns, *Dēvāram*, 260 can be located in South India and Sri Lanka, and of these the largest number, over 200, were in Cholamandalam. The distribution of Vaishnava hymnists is less strikingly biased in favour of the Kaveri. Five of the ten *alvars* appear to have come from Tondaimandalam, though only twenty-two of the 108 sacred places of the Vaishnavas (*tirupatis*) are in Tondaimandalam.[112]

The disparity in the sacredness associated with Tondaimandalam, in contrast to Cholamandalam in the hagiography of South Indian *bhakti* Hinduism, may perhaps be explained in many ways. Among the explanations, however, is that Buddhism and Jainism had established a position of primacy among peasant folk as well as townsmen in the central Tamil plain.

In the Kaveri, by contrast, the form of Aryan religion which had come to be most valued by peasant folk was that devoted to Vedic gods, and this provided a more receptive context for the devotional hymns of the devotees of the Puranic gods Siva and Vishnu. This may account, too, for the choice of the great teacher Sankaracharya of Kanchi as the site for one of his centres (*mathas*) for the dissemination of Advaita Vedanta. If the tradition of the origin of the Sankaracharya *matha* is accepted, then one explanation of this eighth century decision was to mount an attack upon Buddhism and Jainism in the very centre of their strength, Kanchi. If that was its purpose, it was surely successful, for all overt vestiges of these religions have long been expunged from Kanchi. In addition, according to some Saivite traditions, the powerful female deity, Kamakshi, was transformed by the piety of Sankara

[111] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, p. 9, note no.3.

[112] George W. Spencer, 'The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Shaivite Hymns', *NUMEN; International Review of the History of Religion*, v. 17 (December 1970), pp. 236-7. Spencer lists thirteen sites in South Arcot district of which most, if not all, can be included in Chola country. In addition Tanjavur had 160 and Tiruchirapalli district had eighteen. Also *see*: K.V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, p. 9, note 4 and P.V. Jagdisa Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 221-30. Nilakanta Sastri has argued that the first four Vaishnava saints, all of Tondaimandalam (viz., Poygai, Puclam, Pey and Tirumalisai), were 'waifs and strays', that is, of low birth, thus strengthening the difference between the Kaveri, where Saivite ,devotees came from all castes, and Tondaimandalam, where the first four were of apparently very low status; ('Vaishnavism and the early Alvars', *T.A.S.S.I* Silver Jubilee Volume, 1962, pp. 123-4).

to a benign, *bhakti* deity providing Kanchi, and Tondaimandalam in general, with what has continued to be its most popular devotional deity.[113]

Existing evidence scarcely permits a final choice of explanations for the distinctions between Tondaimandalam and Cholamandalam in the matter of religion, but the differences in the two regions with respect to religion appear quite clear. The durability of Buddhism and Jainism in the central plain may indeed have been an important factor in the proliferation of prestigious Brahman settlements as suggested by Sathianathaier.

But the most significant reason for the emergence of Tondaimandalam as an intermediate zone of the Chola segmentary state was the impressive kingship and state established by the Pallavas. From Simhavishnu in the late sixth century to Nandivarman II, Pallavamalla, in about the middle of the eighth century, a line of powerful warriors secured an effective overlordship in Tondaimandalam and southward into the Kaveri and Vaigai basins. Cholas and Pandyas were compelled to recognize the Pallava hegemony, as were those chiefs north and west toward the Deccan strength of the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas. After the middle of the eighth century, Pallava control was weakened, and for the next 150 years the Pallavas were linked, perhaps subordinately, to warriors of southern Karnataka, the Gangas. This vestigal Pallava overlordship was finally ended in the early years of the tenth century when the Pallava Aparajita was conquered by Aditya Chola I.

The broad outlines of the Pallava state are too well-known to require reiteration here. It is sufficient merely to speak of the evidence of a powerful kingship and a network of political loyalities in most of Tondaimandalam and, for a time, much of the Coromandel plain. The Pallava state was a more impressive state than any previous one in the macro region. Beyond politics, one notes its participation in the revival of Hindu institutions to a place of dominance after the long ascendancy of Buddhism and Jainism; its monumental architectural accomplishments in Kanchi, Mahabalipuram and elsewhere which permanently influenced the forms of temple structures in South India and beyond; its participation in the agricultural development of Tondaimandalam which made of

[113] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, p. 14.

the central Tamil plain the significant secondary core of peasant agrarian organization in the macro region from that time. The primary question which arises from these accomplishments between the sixth and ninth centuries is why Tondaimandalam did not become the central domain of a state encompassing the entire plain from the Kistna-Godavari delta to the tip of the peninsula, Kanya Kumari. The essential answer to this question would appear to involve three factors: (1) the fact of an ancient, indigenous Chola kingship in the Kaveri basin; (2) the superior population and wealth of the Kaveri and (3) the special importance of that area for the hymnists of devotional Saivism. These were surely significant in the long run, but still leave unclear more proximate reasons.

For a brief time in the early seventh century, as already noticed, the Pallavas did in fact achieve widespread dominion in the macro region. Simhavishnu (*c.* A.D. 574-600) having first cleared the plain of the 'Kalabhras', thus ending that perceived menace, successfully campaigned against the Cholas, then a power of little consequence, and against the more formidable Pandyas of Madurai. He and his successor Mahendravarman I (*c.* A.D. 600-630) also pressed their authority northward, perhaps to the Kistna-Godavari. However, by the end of Mahendravarman's reign, Pallava power had reached its peak. Mahendra was a king whom history has remembered with much admiration for his building at Mahaballipuram and Kanchi, his conversion from Jainism by the hymnist saint Appar (himself a convert to Saivism from Jainism) and his repute as a poet and musician. Mahendra's successors could do little more than to protect the wealth of the central plain from the raids of their long-standing enemies of the Deccan, the Chalukyas of Badami. Later Pallavas were only partially successful in this effort, for the Chalukya Vikramaditya II (A.D. 733-744) is said to have taken and looted Kanchi three times, a testimony to the wealth which Tondaimandalam had come to possess and its attraction for military adventurers of the age. To this may be added the succession problems of the Pallavas which produced a break in the main line with Nandivarman II, or Pallavamalla.

Nandivarman II was almost certainly a usurper of the Pallava throne,[114] one who may have come from a distant place, perhaps even from South-east Asia as some scholars have suggested.[115]

[114] Ibid., v. 1, p. 135 and Nilakanta Sastri, *HSI*, p. 148.

[115] T.N. Subramaniam, *The Pallavas of Kanchi and South-east Asia*, The Swadesa-

But, more important than his usurpation — though perhaps a result of that act — the Pallava kingship altered its expression of authority and sovereignty in fundamental ways. No longer were Pallava kings referred to as the descendants of kings whose rule was legitimated by reference to founders who performed Vedic sacrifices, but rather on the basis of being the source of *dāna*, gifts, to Brahmans and to gods. Though this is a shift in the language of royal authority, Pallava kingship was certainly no less sacral than it had been. The king was still the anointed ruler whose military prowess was overwhelming and was purified by the *mahabhiśeka* as depicted in the panels sculpted upon the walls of the Vaikunthaperumal temple in Kanchi.[116] But, thence-forward, Pallava kings present themselves as munificent *yajamānas*, centres of a redistributional system of resources which encompassed the world, their realm.

As significant as this change in the expression of royal authority was a change in the conception of the king's sovereignty in which great local chieftains attained a status of generous dominion only slightly less than the king's. This was achieved in the references in inscriptional *praśastis* to the *vijñapti*, or petitioner of grants from the kings. In Pallava inscriptions earlier than Nandivarman II, a dominant figure in inscriptions recording grants to Brahmans and to gods was the *ājñāpti*, or executor of royal gifts, usually a warrior companion of the king. Records of the time of Nandivarman and his successors make no reference to this *ājñāpti*, but give great attention to the petitioner of a grant who, in all cases, is presented as a powerful local chieftain. These records portray this local personage as one who not only confers wealth which is his own, within the scope of his *kṣatra*, but following an established form of subordination to regal power seeks the assent of the king for his grant. Moreover, the portion of the record praising the liberality of the local petitioning chieftain was not much less elaborate in praise of him than verses that praised the reigning king.

An unpublished paper of Nicholas Dirks[117] provides a partial

mitran Ltd., Madras, 1967, pp. 81-95.

[116] C. Minakshi, 'The Historical Sculptures of the Vaikunthaperumāḷ Temple, Kāñcī', *Memoires of the Archaeological Survey of India*, no.63, Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1941.

[117] 'Political Systems in Ancient South India', February, 1974, Department of

basis for the preceding discussion of changes in the expression of Pallava authority and sovereignty. It is argued there that the broadened conception of sovereignty represented by the more conspicuous place of local chiefs as king-like prestators was forced upon the Pallava kings by the exigent pressure of its enemies from beyond Tondaimandalam. Such pressures cannot be discounted of course, but what is more persuasively shown by Dirk's analysis and the work of others is the broad acceptance of the Pallava kingship as the focus of loyalty and participation by the great chiefs of Tondaimandalam; that is, as a proper regional kingship co-equal with any of the macro region. From the late eighth century onwards, Pallava kings using established ritual formulas—of which the inscriptional *praśasti* is one element — succeeded in incorporating the established prestige of regional chieftainships; it is upon such incorporation that kingship depended.

But their kingship was substantially restricted to this area owing to the almost constant pressure of predatory raids of the Chalukyas and their allies, the Gangas, from the north, and the Pandyas and their allies, the Sinhalese, from the south. In all of this, Chola country was reduced to the political ignominy of a shatter zone over which Pallava and Pandyan soldiers moved even as the sacred character of the Chola country was being etched by the hymnist devotees of Siva and Vishnu. All that we see of Cholas at this time is a line of warriors in the dry country north of Tondaimandalam (modern Cuddapah, Kurnool, and Bellary) who called themselves Chola (or Choda) in inscriptions; they are reported by Hsüan Tsang as ruling in these northern parts. Of the Uraiyur Cholas nothing is known.[118]

Pandyas, not Cholas, were the great contenders with the Pallavas for power in the southern peninsula prior to Vijayalaya Chōḷa; later, during the period of Chola ascendency, Pandyan territory in the modern districts of Madurai and Tirunelveli, along with Tondaimandalam, constituted the second, major intermediate zone of the Chola segmentary state. Pandya country shared with Chola country a regal tradition in classical antiquity which Tondaimandalam and the Pallavas did not. Beginning with the obscure Pandya Kadungon (*c.* A.D. 590-620), a line of warriors began their

History, University of Chicago.

[118] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, pp. 112-13. Epigraphists refer to Telugu Chodas.

kingly rise at the same time as the line of Pallava Simhavishnu. As in the case of most Indian dynasties — south and north — the origin and early successes of the early rulers are known from a few inscriptions. The Pandyan line is reconstructed from four sets of copperplates of the late eighth and tenth centuries.[119] These plates set forth mythic and real genealogical details and a record of the peoples against whom the ruling lineage first contended to establish their authority in the territory which became their central domain — the Vaigai basin for the Pandyas — and then those peoples and territories over which an overlordship was extended.

The earliest Pandyan warriors mentioned in these inscriptions are the same as those named in some of the Classical poems (e.g., the *Purananuru*) and refer to kings whom the poems show to have been great warriors and supporters of Brahmans and Vedic sacrifices (*yagas*) including the *rājasūya* and *aśvamēdha*. From the account of the ubiquitous Hsüan Tsang, the inference can be drawn that the central domain of the Pandyas, in the seventh century at least, was probably a land of poor agriculture owing to the salinity of its soil, though its people were avid traders.[120] This conforms reasonably well with references to the Vaigai region in Classical works and suggests that the interest of Pandyan warriors in the Kaveri to the north, which they came to dominate in the early ninth century, displacing the short-lived Pallava overlordship there, may have been prompted by the rich food resources of the western Kaveri delta.[121] As in the case of the Pallavas, one of the early rulers was spectacularly converted from Jainism. The Pandyan Arikesari Maravarman of the late seventh century is said to have been won to the Saivite faith by the saint, Jnanasambandar.[122] Finally, the Pandyan connection with Lanka from the ninth century provides yet another sign of the energetic and aggressive propensities of these rulers to strengthen the base of their political operations. Beginning with Srimara Srivallabha in the

[119] Discussed conveniently in ibid., pp. 99 ff: the late eighth century 'Madras Museum Plates of Jatilavarman'; the 'Velvikudi Plates of Nedunjadayan'; the 'Smaller Sinnamanūr Plates'; and the tenth century 'Larger Sinnamanūr Plates'.

[120] Ibid., p. 120 where Hsüan Tsang's 'Malakuta' is identified as *milai-kūrram*.

[121] Ibid., p. 115.

[122] The dates of this ruler are given by Subrahmanya Ayyar, ibid., p. 127, as A.D. 650-80 and by Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 165, as A.D. 670-700.

early ninth century and continuing through the time of Varaguna-varman (A.D. 862-880),[123] Pandyans were actively involved in Lanka politics not simply as predators, but seemingly seeking a durable connection with it. Here again, the sea is to be seen not as a barrier, but as a route of opportunity no more hazardous than the tracts of desolate country which bordered other important population cores of the peninsula.

Unlike the Tondaimandalam intermediate zone of the Chola segmentary state, Pandya country proved a difficult place for the Chola overlords. Again and again the country lying south of the Kaveri required punitive expeditions against would-be restorers of Pandyan kingship. Indeed, so implacable was the resistance to Chola rule that the policy of Rajendra I to directly rule modern Madurai and Tirunelveli through a viceroy could not be sustained later. Parantaka I invaded Pandya country three times between A.D. 907 and 953, and though he claimed the title *madiraikoṇḍa* ('who took Madurai') and, after his third incursion, the title *madiraiyum-īlamum-koṇḍa* ('who took Madurai and Lanka'), assertions of a separate kingship by warriors of the southern country continued. Throughout the Chola period, Pandyan warriors, often in alliance with warriors of Lanka, challenged the Chola claims to hegemony in the relatively well-settled core regions of the Vaigai and Tambraparni (Ambasamudram). In the more desolate parts of the southern country the Chola overlordship was often non-existent. Rajaraja I in A.D. 995 made the reconquest of Pandya country one his first great ventures outside of Chola country, renaming it, *rājarāja-pāṇḍinādu*. Under Rajendra I, resistance to the Chola overlords resulted in the short-lived viceregal arrangement, but this was to no avail.[124]

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when Chola power waned, a series of Pandyan warriors, notably one Kulasekhara, had free rein over Lanka and constituted a major source of molestation there according to the Lanka chronicle, the *Mahavamsa*.[125] He and others also pressed claims to overlordship of the northern parts of the macro region as well, and under Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (A.D. 1216-27) and Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II (A.D.

[123] Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 165.

[124] Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, pp. 143-55; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāndyan Kingdom*, pp. 100 ff.

[125] Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, pp. 155-60.

1227-51), Pandyan power became supreme in the southern peninsula, looting and extracting homage from warriors in southern Chola country, Tondaimandalam, and the Hoysalas of Gangavadi and Kongu.[126] This century of Pandyan expansion was brought to an end by the invasion of Muslims in A.D. 1310.

Pandya country differed from Tondaimandalam in the continuous resistance of its chiefs to an overlordship of the Cholas. One factor in this resistance was that Pandyans shared with the Cholas an ancient tradition of kingship. Yet, the development of institutions in this southern portion of Tamil country were similar to those of the central plain. In Pandya country, as in Tondaimandalam, there came to be large tracts of fertile land under the control of a peasantry which called itself 'Vellala' and which shared a mythic origin as well as the pretension to ritual parity with the dominant peasantry of the Kaveri and the central plain. Here, too, there were *brahmadeya*s established with the ceremonial collaboration of such peasant groups and their chiefs and dedicated to the same Brahmanical learning as elsewhere. These Brahman villages, as shown on Map IV-1, are concentrated in the river basins of the southern peninsula at Ambasamudram, where ten can be located, and at Tiruchchendur, Tirunelveli, Nanguneri, Srivaikuntam, Sankaranainarkoil, Kovilpatti, Tenkasi, and Srivilliputtur. Around Madurai, there were *brahmadeya*s at Periyakulam, Madurai itself, Nilakkottai (in Dindigal taluk of the nineteenth century), and Palni. These latter were in the western portions of modern Madurai district which constituted a fertile catchment area for run-off from the hill boundaries of the district. Many of these villages date from the Chola period, some are earlier, and many were formed during the heroic days of Pandyan expansion in the thirteenth century when a large number of peasant villages were brought together to form great settlements under the supervision of a *mahasabhā*. Finally, in Pandya country, as in Tondaimandalam, and in Chola country itself, there were substantial tracts of inferior land, unimproved by irrigation and generally hazardous to man and beast alike where there lived people whose culture and society and predatory ways were such as to make their territories marginal to each zone as a whole.

In Pandya country, as in Chola country, the names of the inhabi-

[126] Ibid., pp. 164-71 and Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom*, pp. 122ff.

tants of such marginal or peripheral tracts were Maravar and Kallar; in Tondaimandalam, such groups were more diverse, including Telugu and Kannada speakers in the northern parts of Tondaimandalam and, in the southern parts, Tamil-speaking Pallis (who also were important in the western parts of Naduvil-nadu). These folk were but intermittently linked to the normative order over which the Brahmans occupied an important place and where the landed people, closely tied to Brahmans, exercised major dominance under chiefs who recognized the overlordship of the Chola kings. Some accommodation of these often fierce, clan-like folk was made by the peasantry and chiefs of the central domain of the Cholas and those of the intermediate zones of Pandimanda-lam and Tondaimandalam, but in the main, peripheral areas can be so designated because they were physically removed from the core cultures of the zones proper. Thus, while these isolated tracts or peripheral areas were considered a part of the central and inter-mediate zones and though they were in regular contact with the major tracts of established peasant society and culture, these isolated places developed distinctive characteristics of their own.

Much of modern Ramnad comprised a peripheral area within the intermediate Pandya zone of the Chola segmentary state. Most of this area was *pālai* according to the *tiṇai* classification of the Classical poetry. It was a land so poorly endowed by nature as to preclude large populations and reliable agriculture. During medieval times, three kinds of folk can be identified there, and the interaction among the three provided for a distinctive social, political, and economic configuration. The three peoples were: Maravars, a militarily capable, clan-organized people who did not fully acquire peasant culture until the nineteenth century when irrigation provided a margin of security to the hazardous agriculture of the region; a sizable community of fisher-folk along the some-what sheltered coast of the Palk Strait; and a vigorous trading people, the Nattukkottai Chettis, who date their immigration into the Tiruppattur and Devakottai divisions of modern Sivaganga and Ramnad from Chola times.[127] During the late Chola period and the time of Pandyan expansion of the thirteenth century, this part of the southern peninsula was rarely graced by temples and

[127] Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, v. 5, pp. 250-2. This claim to ancient residence is reportedly denied by other trading groups of this region.

inscriptions, and obviously stood apart from the dominant culture zones to the west, though tenuously connected by trade and some interaction. The Nattukkottai Chettis, in recent times a prosperous trading and money-lending community in the southern peninsula and in South-east Asia, apparently began their trade activities as carriers and traders of salt. An early name for these traders was Uppu (meaning 'salt' in Tamil) Chettis.[128]

Maravars had an early ethnic identity in Classical works where they are depicted as personifications of the harsh and forbidding *pālai*. Throughout the medieval period, these were a people apart though they were never reduced to the opprobrium of the British period when they were called, with others, 'criminal castes'.[129] Indeed, Maravar chiefs achieved considerable eminence and became major political actors in the southern peninsula during the time of the Nayaks of Madurai, in the seventeenth century. Later, even after the British had branded Maravars as a 'criminal caste' they conferred recognition upon some of them who had not challenged, but at times assisted, the establishment of British control during the eighteenth century. The latter were granted zamindari estates and the greatest of them was recognized as the Sethupati of Ramnad.[130] The progenitors of many of the Maravar chiefs who played important roles in the seventeenth century and later, may have been immigrants from the Kaveri or from Pandya country displaced by the earlier consolidations of these zones rather than descendents of the people described in Classical poems. For the adventurous warrior, or simply one forced to flee his ancestral lands, this wild, dry country at the margins of increasingly well settled lands dominated by zonal ruling houses would have provided opportunities, albeit dangerous ones.

What modern Ramnad was for the Pandyan intermediate zone — a land of poor agricultural capability, sparsely peopled, and dominated politically by clan-organized peoples — modern Puduk kottai was for Chola country. The northern edge of this Cholamandalam peripheral area, modern Kulattur taluk, is directly south of modern Tiruchirapalli. In Chola times, this area consisted of a large, sparsely peopled territory called Konadu or *īrattapadi-*

[128] Ibid., p. 262.

[129] F.S. Mullaly, *Notes on the Criminal Tribes of the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1892.

[130] Ibid., 111-12.

koṇḍacholaṃ-valanāḍu which extended to the southern Vellaru river. For the most part, then, as more recently, this tract had few reliable water sources and poor soil of high salinity (*kaḷar* soil).[131] The area constituted a substantial barrier between the population of the Kaveri around Uraiyur (modern Tiruchirapalli) and the Vellaru basin in its upper and middle course near Kodambalur, about twenty-five miles from the Kaveri. The southern Vellaru marked the edge of the peripheral area below the Kaveri; it formed the basis for a large, if scattered, population concentrated in a few large settlements with sufficient wealth to support some *brahmadeya* settlements and temples. Almost all of these are within a few miles of the river.[132] The inscriptions of the southern Vellaru heartland of modern Pudukkottai State refer to sixteen *brahmadeya*s of which five existed in the Chola period, the balance having been established during the Pandyan expansion in the thirteenth century.[133] On this somewhat narrow ecological base, a minor power centre developed which was uneasily poised between the Pandyans and the Cholas. Here, the Irukkuvel chiefs exercised local dominance and some degree of larger influence on Chola politics.

These chiefs at Kodambalur maintained themselves in the hazardous interplay of Chola and Pandya conflict during the time of Chola consolidation under Parantaka I and Aditya I. An ancient line of chiefs, the Irukkuvels appear to have been in close relations with the dreaded Kalabhras, and it is the speculation of some scholars that they were part of the Kalabhras.[134] During the ninth century, the Irukkuvels prudently cast their lot with the Cholas and became the mainstay of Chola power, serving in Chola armies and intermarrying with the ruling family.[135] During the twelfth century these warriors suffered the fate of many other chiefs at any earlier time — they ceased to be visible as important

[131] K.R. Venkatarama, *A Manual of the Pudukkottai State*, Pudukkottai, 1944, v. 2, pt 2, p. 1012.

[132] *A Chronological List of Inscriptions of Pudukkottai State*, Pudukkottai, 1929, pp. 8 ff, for Chola inscriptions.

[133] Venkatarama, op. cit., v. 2, pt 2, p. 652.

[134] M. Arokiaswami, *The Early History of the Vellar Basin; with Special Reference to the Irukkuvels of Kodumbalur*, Amudha Nilayam Ltd., Madras, 1954.

[135] Ibid., pp. 100-1. Arokiaswami claimed that the title of *mūvēndavēḷār* was the special prerogative of the Irukkuvels, thus vastly exaggerating the importance of these chiefs. His later discussion of the term in the *IHQ*, op. cit., without referring to this earlier discussion, corrects that view.

political actors; unlike other chiefs whose independent identities were incorporated by the Chola overlordship, however, the Irukkuvels may have lost their dominance over the southern Vellaru basin completely, and shifted their base of power to Kongu whose chiefs, the Kongu Cholas, identified themselves as *kōnāṭṭār* (of *kōnāḍu*).

In Arokiaswami's study of this line of chiefs, the major thesis about the Irukkuvels and their origins is that they were the progenitors of the Vellala people of the peninsula! It is a view which grants to the mythology of origin a plausibility seldom accorded, and it is a view which is unacceptable. This dry tract, Kodambalur, in the narrow, fertile land formed by the Vellaru its core, had chiefs not drawn from Vellala peasants primarily but from the tough hunters and pastoralists who peopled the Ramnad region in this early period. Kallars of Pudukkottai, like those of Ramnad, and Maravars of both dry regions, were the primary sections of the population. Here, land in only a few places was capable of supporting the full orchestration of elements which marked the society and culture of the plains proper. Only slowly — in many places not until the last two centuries — did peasant peoples from the Kaveri seek fields and villages in these ecological and culturally marginal areas. And, it was only under extreme pressure — much of it caused by threats from those tightly organized, rugged people of the dry country — that peasant people found their way into these areas. Such pressure is suggested by the ensconced presence of *kaḷḷar-makkaḷ* in the lush *kulamaṅgala-nāḍu* around Tiruppuvanam in modern Kumbakonam taluk of Tanjavur according to a thirteenth century Pandyan inscription there.[136] Simultaneously, of course, as tank-supported irrigated agriculture was very slowly established in these dry places of the southern Tamil plain, people there modified their lives to take advantage of these changes. Some groups of Kallars and Maravars were transformed to the status of Vellalas by imitating the modes of life appropriate to the peasantry, accounting for the Tamil proverb descriptive of these places: Kallars in time become Maravars who, in turn, changed to Vellalas.[137]

Having surveyed some of the general features of the component

[136] Thurston, op. cit., v. 3, p. 63.
[137] *I.M.P.* v. 2, p. 1245; *A.R.E.* 1911, no.159.

parts of the Chola segmentary state, closer attention can now be given to certain variations. Among indicators of differences among the broad divisions of the South Indian macro region as well as differences within each such division, the distribution of *brahmadeya*s and temple inscriptions are perhaps the most sensitive and important.

The central Tamil plain contained two groupings of segmentary units: the major grouping comprising the intermediate zone of Tondaimandalam and a minor grouping comprising the discrete sub-region of Naduvil-nadu. Since each of these can be divided into a large number of constituent parts, one is confronted with a very complex region as a whole.

Partly, this complexity arises from the dispersed pattern of settlement over the central Tamil plain, a pattern determined by the fact that at fairly regular intervals the plain receives drainage from the interior upland which, given an ability to preserve water through tank storage, made it possible to sustain clusters of agrarian population. Through numerous breaks in the upland catchment area at around the 1000 foot contour, some sixty-five miles from the coast, these streams nourish the soil upon which are dependent the two large populations of peasant peoples in Tondaimandalam and Naduvil-nadu, and many minor ones from Lake Pulicat in the north to the Ponnaiyar basin in the south. The two major population concentrations are the primary one of the Palar Cheyyar basins around Kanchi and the secondary one of the Ponnaiyar-Mallattar basins around Tirukkoyilur. Numerous streams draining the Kalarayan and Javadi hills traverse the plain between the two major settlement areas.

The distribution of *brahmadeya*s and temple inscriptions of the Chola period are strongly correlated with these physical characteristics of the plain, given tank irrigation. *Brahmadeya*s are found in the central, Kanchi, portion of Tondaimandalam, in the middle course of the Cheyyar, and along the 250 foot contour between the Cheyyar and Kortalaiyar river (13:15 degrees north). In the modern district of Chingleput, this would include the taluks of Chingleput, Conjeevaram, and Saidapet. Only a few Brahman settlements are found in Madhurantakam taluk and fewer in Ponneri and Tiruvallur taluks. In North Arcot district, most of such marker settlements are found in Cheyyar taluk (Arcot of the late nineteenth century and earlier), Arkonam, Gudiyattam, with a few

in the western parts of Wandiwash where the Cheyyar flows.

As to the southern cluster of the central Tamil plain, the *locus* of *brahmadeya*s and inscriptions is the Ponnaiyar basin. This riverine tract and its surrounding territory, comprised Naduvil-nadu. This zone seems never to have been long included in either of the major concentrations of population in Tondaimandalam or Cholamandalam, though, at times, it may have been considered a part of two broad *vaḷanāḍu* territories which lay in the peripheral area of Chola country north of the Kollidam: *rājēndrasimha-vaḷanāḍu* and *viṟurājabhayaṅkara-vaḷanāḍu*. A substantial population was concentrated in the Ponnaiyar basin, but beyond this core, population was sparse and the basis of peasant agriculture too slender to support much beyond the hardy Palli peasantry (Vanniyars of later times), the only major cultivating people to be consistently associated with left castes (*iḍaṅgai*).

The coastal plain supporting these major peasant regions is from forty to sixty miles deep; between the two clusters centred on Kanchi and Tirukkoyilur the plain shrinks to about half of that depth. Almost no Brahman settlements are found above the 250 foot contour, and none are above the 500 foot contour which runs at a depth of fifty miles from the sea. Within this narrow, well-watered corridor, the distribution of *brahmadeya*s and inscriptions of the age can be used to define the central, intermediate, and peripheral areas of the two clusters.

Table VII-1 displays some highly selective Chola data comparing the central Tamil plain with the core of the Kaveri basin. The table is based upon inscriptions collected between 1888 and 1915, and published by the Department of Epigraphy, Government of India. V. Rangacharya organized these inscriptions arranged by taluk, and district for the Madras Presidency,[138] and the table is partially based upon that topographical compilation.[139] In addition, data upon which Map IV-1 is based have been used for the taluk-wise

[138] *A Topographical List of the Inscriptions of the Madras Presidency*, 3 vols., Madras, 1919.

[139] As in any aggregative, as opposed to anecdotal, use of inscriptions, it is important to consider that all of the extant inscriptions have not been noticed and copied and that a large number of inscriptions have been destroyed and damaged. Of the inscriptions used here it is also important to note that included are only those collected to 1915 which means that they are very incomplete as well as biased toward the more prominent of the Chola sites, thus exaggerating some of the differences drawn here.

distribution of *brahmadeya*s. While a number of serious reservations must inevitably be raised about all of these data and their use, Table VII-1 is intended to do no more than indicate certain gross differences in the distribution of these marker elements in the central Tamil plain during Chola times. These data represent a first approximation of major kinds of segmentary units of the time.

Chola temple inscriptions and *brahmadeya*s are unevenly distributed in ways which would be anticipated from a knowledge of factors related to agricultural production, hence to population and wealth. Taluks with the greatest number of Chola inscriptions or those which have the largest proportion of their total inscriptions from Chola times also tend to have the largest number of *brahmadeya*s. In Tondaimandalam, these taluks are: Arkonam and Gudiyattam in North Arcot and Saidapet and Conjeevaram in Chingleput; in Naduvil-nadu, the core localities are Tirukkoyilur and parts of Tindivanam, Cuddalore, and Villupuram (Chidambaram taluk being grouped with Cholamandalam). Certain anomalies in these data should not be overlooked, however. Tiruvannamalai taluk with about seventeen per cent of the inscriptions for North Arcot district, of which about the same proportion dates from the Chola period, shows only one *brahmadeya*, Puliyurnadi-chaturvedimangalam. There are also distortions which must inevitably occur in aggregating data according to the taluk and district territories of British India, for these administrative units were constituted regions bearing no considered relationship to modern social realities (except as the creation of these units established such realities), much less historical ones. Notwithstanding such anomalies and distortions, the core portions of Tondaimandalam and Naduvil-nadu are seen to have a lower density of both Chola inscriptions and *brahmadeyas* though the absolute number of both inscriptions and Brahman settlements for the whole of Tondaimandalam (as shown in the taluks of Table VII-1) slightly exceed those of the core portions of Cholamandalam (as shown in the data from Tanjavur district).

The same data are presented in Table VII-2 in a form which presents areal clusters of the central Tamil plain according to whether they were central, intermediate, or peripheral within the two zones. The effect generally is to emphasize the graded quality of the dispersal pattern over the entire central plain. Bounding the

TABLE VII-1

Distribution of Chola Inscriptions and *Brahmadeyas* by Selected Madras Taluks to 1915

District/Taluk	Total Inscriptions	Chola Inscriptions	Percentage of Chola Inscriptions	*Brahmadeyas*
North Arcot	727	284	38	28
Arkonam	151	136	90	8
Arni	70	4	5	0
Cheyyar	91	34	27	6
Gudiyattam	60	35	58	6
Polur	30	8	26	0
Tiruppattur	6	1	15	1
Tiruvannamalai	124	22	18	1
Vellore	61	18	30	1
Walajapet	49	19	39	3
Wandiwash	85	37	43	3
Chingleput	1221	596	49	47
Chingleput	230	93	40	6
Conjeevaram	219	118	55	16
Madurantakam	214	91	42	5
Ponneri	89	38	42	2
Saidapet	378	228	60	14
Tiruvallur	91	28	30	4
Chittoor				
Chandragiri	22	8	36	1
Chittoor	15	4	26	1
Kalahasti	110	75	68	0
Punganur	62	19	30	3
Puttur	30	16	53	0
Tiruttani	80	48	60	4

Nellore				
Gudur	133	57	43	0
Polur	45	9	20	1
South Arcot	1094	316	35	32
Chidambaram	195	52	38	6
Cuddalore	160	97	60	3
Kallakurichchi	2	0	0	0
Tindivanam	85	50	59	4
Tirukkoyilur	480	271	56	11
Villupuram	93	61	65	4
Vriddhāchalam	46	6	13	4
Tanjavur	1639	1300	80	93
Arantangi	7	2	0	0
Kumbakonam	478	324	68	25
Mannargudi	116	85	73	6
Mayavaram	131	93	70	24
Nannilam	169	124	73	6
Nagapatnam	77	58	75	4
Papanasam	121	99	82	9
Pattukkottai	49	30	60	4
Shiyali	34	32	95	5
Tanjavur	336	325	98	10
Tirutturaipundi	130	118	90	2

central clusters of Tondaimandalam and Naduvil-nadu were localities of diminishing populations sited with increasing jeopardy as the rising, drier lands of the bordering hill country is approached and phasing into the peripheral zones of Kongu on the west and Gangavadi to the north. Zonal divisions of Tondaimandalam are shown in Map VII-2. The central (C), intermediate (I), and peripheral (P) zones are represented along with some of the more important sacred centres and settlements of the *mandalam*.

Kongu country and Gangavadi were peripheral zones of the Chola segmentary state system. Their links with the Chola system

are less related to conquests by Chola armies from the plains than to the movement of cultivators to these previously isolated upland extensions of the Tamil and Mysore plains. Prior to the time of the Cholas, the isolation of Kongu, a relatively sparsely settled region,[140] was only occasionally disturbed by marauding warriors and peoples moving between the Coromandel plain and Karnataka. At such times, Kongu was a shatter zone and, like other such regions in India, showed complex overlappings of peoples and cultures. Gangavadi, on the other hand, had long been the centre of a minor peninsular dynasty — the Gangas — after whom the area was named. It was conquered by Rajaraja I in A.D. 1004 and was thereafter subjected to heavy Tamil in-migration consisting not only of Tamil peasant groups but of Tamil Brahmans as well.[141] From the eleventh to the fifteenth century the fundamental influence upon both peripheral zones came from the Kaveri, and the result was an overlay of Chola culture and institutions which did not expunge the earlier diversity of these places but only added to their variegated character.

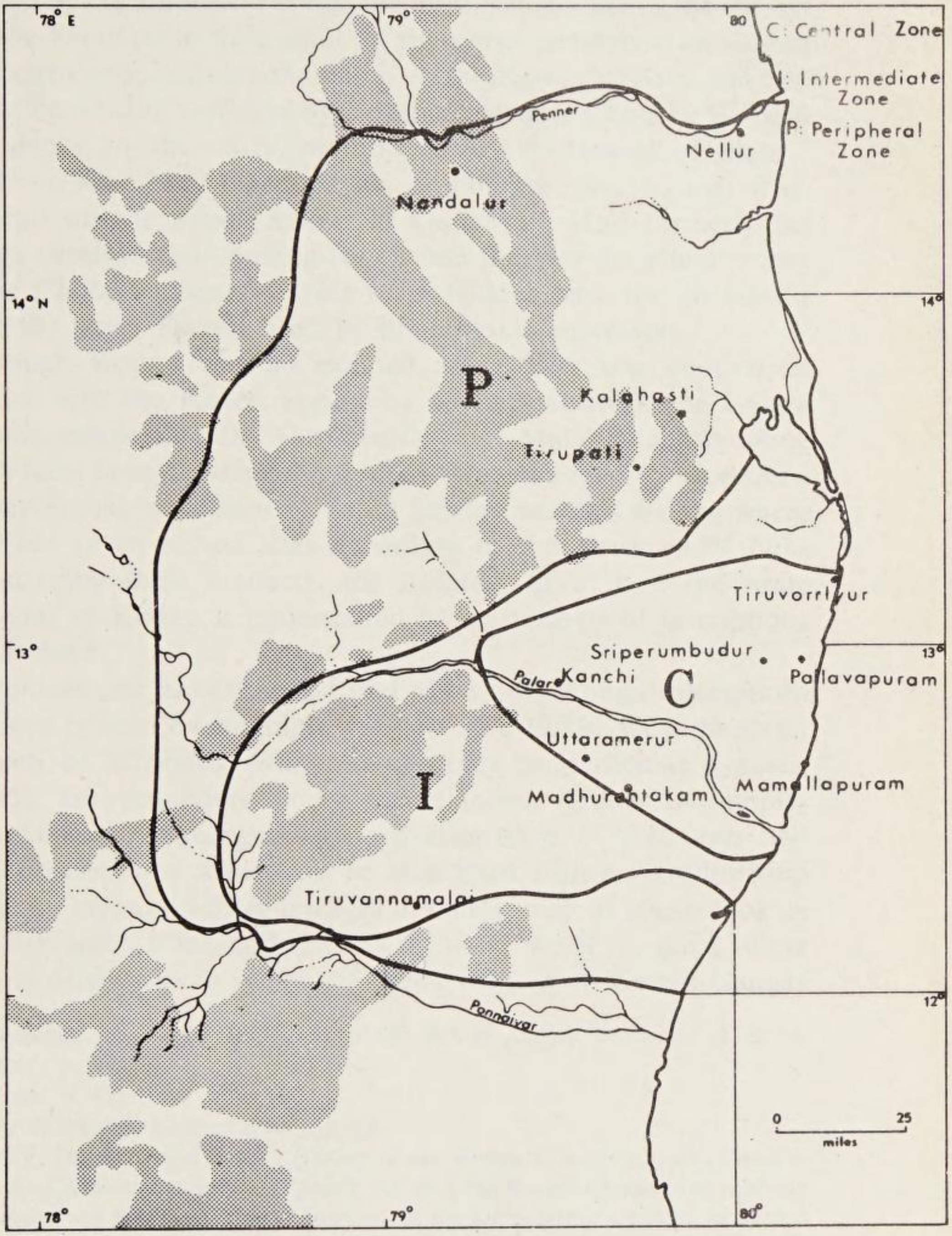
Kongu was a troubled frontier region during the early period of the great Cholas. Called *malai-nāḍu* in the Tiruvalangadu Plates, or *vīrachōḷamaṇḍalam* in most other Chola inscriptions, it was a place where Chola and Pandyan warriors sought dominance and where distinctions were not always made between Kongu, southern Karnataka (Gangavadi), and modern Coorg.[142] An A.D. 1012 Tamil inscription[143] of Rajaraja I from Balmuri in Gangavadi refers to his conquests in Gangavadi, Malenad (Coorg and the western hill portion of modern Karnataka), and Kongu as well as Nolambavadi (modern south-central Karnataka), Andhra, Kalinga, and Pandya countries. However, after Rajaraja I's time there are few Chola records. Chola inscriptions of Parantaka I, Parakesarivarman Uttama-Chola, Rajaraja I, Rajendra I, Rajendra II, Virarajendra, and Kulottunga II and III are found at Erode, Valappanadu, Tiruchchengodu, and Karur

[140] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 257.

[141] Rice, *Mysore; A Gazetteer*, p. 316.

[142] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Contry*, p. 202; also Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'The History of Kongu Country', in *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, where other names for Kongu are listed: Adhirajarajamandalam in the eleventh century and Cholakeralamandalam in the twelfth century, p. 55.

[143] Cited in Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 205; *E.C.*, v. 3, sr. no.140.



VII-2 Tondaimandalam Zonal Divisions *c.* A.D. 1300

in the northern and eastern parts of Kongu. The southern and western portions of the territory appear to have been less directly affected by the Cholas. Though the inscriptional link to the Cholas and the Tamil plain were tenuous, there was certainly a movement of peasant peoples from the plains to the Kongu upland, and this migration was little affected by the replacement of Chola by Hoysala ascendency in the early twelfth century.[144] Hoysala Ballala I in about A.D. 1120 extended his dominance over Kongu from Talakad on the upper Kaveri in Gangavadi (and formerly the Ganga capital), thus joining for a time the two peripheral zones of the Chola segmentary state to provide a base for an assault upon the lower Kaveri itself by his Hoysala successors.

Though Kongu was an isolated area, there was continuous contact with the Kaveri region by an ancient road, the *konigu-peruvali*, connecting the Coromandel and Malabar coasts along which have been discovered hoards of Roman coins.[145] Moreover, the devotional movement of Tamil Saivites touched Kongu where there are seven sacred sites according to the *Devaram*.[146] Notwithstanding these contacts, the isolated, or at best the route character of Kongu is underscored by an analysis of inscriptions found there.

Arokiaswami has estimated that about 900 Kongu inscriptions had been noticed by epigraphists by the mid 1950s. Of these about 630 can be attributed with fair accuracy to particular dynastic periods, the remainder being miscellaneous grants to temples by local notables recognizing no overlordship.[147] Well over half of the inscriptions which can be associated with an overlordship in Kongu belong to three lineages of chiefs, each of which took as their surnames, titles, and epithets those of one of the great ruling lineages of the macro region.[148] Thus, there were Kongu-Gangas

[144] Subrahmanya Aiyer, in *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, p. 55.

[145] Ibid., p. 44.

[146] Ibid., p. 49.

[147] Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 22.

[148] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer ('History of the Kongu Country', p. 45 *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2) points out that the Kongu Cholas even used the rotational terms *parakēsari* and *rājakēsari*. In the same author's edition of several Kongu inscriptions of the tenth and eleventh centuries, he argues that this line of chiefs should be called 'Kongu Kōnāttār' (from Kōnādu in modern Pudukkottai: *EI* v. 30, no.19, 'Seven Vatteluttu Inscriptions from the Kongu Country', p. 95).

from the eighth century with ten inscriptions, Kongu-Cholas during the period from A.D. 1004 to 1275 with about 300 inscriptions, and Kongu-Pandyas of the thirteenth century with some 120 records.[149] In each case, titles and personal names are taken from rulers of dominant regional dynasties and used by great Kongu chieftains who bore no relationship — kinship or otherwise — to the royal Cholas, Pandyas, or Gangas.[150] It was a rudimentary form of kingship appropriate to the peripheral zone of a segmentary state in which the royal style was quite specifically linked to that of the great kingships of the macro region because there were lacking traditions of legitimacy to sustain a fully autonomous kingship in these places. Borrowed, or vicarious, legitimacy was necessary and this apparently sufficed to provide for the Kongu region a ritual centre around which locality chiefs could order their political relationships and attempt to cope with increasing pressures of external spoilers in the form of invading armies from the south and north as well as with the influx of new people.

TABLE VII-2

Segmentary Areal Groupings in the Central Tamil Plain during Chola Times [a]

Classification	*Kōṭṭam/Nādu*	District/Taluk	
	TONDAIMANDALAM		
Peripheral Areas North and West	Tiruvēṅgadu-k.	Chittoor	Kalahasti
		Chittoor	Puttūr
	Pavattiri-k.	Chittoor	Chandragiri
			Panganuru
	Paiyyūr-Iḷan-k.		Chittoor
		Nellore	Gudur
	Kunravattana-k.		
		Nellore	Pōlūr

a. Based on Subbarayalu, op. cit., Appendices and Maps.

149 Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 242.

150 Ibid., p. 22 and K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'History of the Kongu Country', *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, p. 60. The latter (p.44) argues that Kongu was not a kingdom, but merely a territory, since its rulers lacked titles of their own. However, the functions of these rulers were royal in the then prevailing sense of it on a primitive level and without benefit of clergy (e.g., the *mahābiśekha*).

		Chingleput	Tiruttani
		Chingleput	Tiruvallūr
	Īkkāṭṭu-k.	N. Arcot	
	Maṇayil-k.		Walajapet
	Mēlūr-k.	N. Arcot	Vellore
Intermediate Areas			
North and West	Paḍuvūr-k.	Chingleput	Ponneri
	Paiyyūr-k.	Chingleput	Tiruvallur
	Palakunra-k.	Chingleput	Tiruttani
	Pulal-k.		
Central Area	Āmūr-k.	N. Arcot	Arkōnam
	Chengaṭṭu-k.	N. Arcot	Gudiyattam
	Eyil-k.	N. Arcot	Cheyyar
	Kaḷattūr-k.	Chingleput	Chingleput
	Kaliyūr-k.	Chingleput	Conjeevaram
	Puliyūr-k.	Chingleput	Saidapet
	Tāmar-k.		
Intermediate Areas	Urrukāttu-k.		
South and West	Chembūr-k.	N. Arcot	Arni
	Indūr-k.	N. Arcot	Polur
	Venkunra-k.	N. Arcot	Tiruvannamalai
		N. Arcot	Wandiwash
		N. Arcot	Tiruppattur
		Chingleput	Madhurantakam
	Oymā-n.	S. Arcot	Tindivanam
Peripheral Areas	Singapura-n.		
South and West			
	Peru-Mukkil-n.		

NADUVIL-NADU

Peripheral Area	Āḍaiyūr-n.	N. Arcot	Tiruvannamalai
North and West			
Intermediate Area	Vavalūr-n.	S. Arcot	Villupuram
North and West			
Central Areas	Kīlkoṇḍai-n.	S. Arcot	Tirukkoyilur
	Udaikkaṭṭu-n.		
	Kurukkai-kūrram		
	Idaiyārru-n.		
	Kudal-Ilāḍaippāḍi-n.		
Intermediate Areas	Kīḻāṉmur-n.	S. Arcot	Cuddalore
South and West	Kayappākkai-n.	S. Arcot	Vriddhachalam
	Vagūr-n.		
	Mēṟkūr-n.		

b. Tiruttani has been part of Chittoor district at times.

Peripheral Area South and West	Kūḍal-n. Mēlārrūr-kūrram	S. Arcot	Kallakurchi

In his work on Kongu — one of the few serious attempts at local history during the pre-modern period — Arokiaswami outlines the way in which new peoples were assimilated into the society of the isolated upland region from about A.D. 1000. He sees the horizontal segmentation of caste groupings as a means by which newçomers found places in the emergent society of this peripheral zone. The *pañja jāti*, or five Kongu castes of modern Coimbatore,[151] are an example of that process which dates from the first Chola incursions in the tenth century. The peoples displaced by these newcomers from the Tamil plain were pastoral and hunting peoples referred to as Kurumbar and Vedar in the chronicle literature used by Arokiaswami.[152] Among the migrants to Kongu of the early imperial Chola period who took the appelation of Kongu as a caste name, there came to exist special, close and interdependent relationships reflected in the kinship terminology and in ritual interactions.

These multiplex bonds served to differentiate the immigrants of the tenth and eleventh centuries from those who came in the thirteenth century according to Arokiaswami.[153] The latter are distinguished by different caste appelations and by a different order of interrelationships such as to constitute a parrallel ordering of castes ranging from respectable Sendalai Vellalas (*tentiśai-chōḷiya-veḷḷāḷar*) of the Kaveri and Padaiyatchi-Vellalas of Tondai-mandalam to untouchables.

Arokiaswami's view of this process may exaggerate the extent to which Kongu was opened to peasant occupation and agriculture in a time as late as the Chola Period. The inscriptions of the Kongu-Gangas and others of the pre-Chola period suggest a well-established, if sparsely settled, agrarian society, and there are very early references to two of the bulwarks of Kongu agriculture: well irrigation and a superior strain of draft bullock from around

[151] *Kongu Country*, p. 267; these include cultivators (Vellalas or Kavundars), merchants (Chettis), barbers, washermen, and untouchable field labourers.

[152] Notably, the *Kongudesarajakkal*, English trans. by the Rev. William Taylor, *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, v. 14, pt 1 (1847), pp. 1-66.

[153] *Kongu Country*, pp. 270-1.

Kangayam. It is more likely that the Chola period saw an intensification of migration to the Kongu upland, possibly the result of military activities here and in Karnataka by the Cholas, and an adaptation by newcomers of the existing agricultural techniques which have proved to be among the most adaptive in South India. The crystalization of these diverse populations of Kongu into a single, complex local society may have come, as suggested by Arokiaswami, in the thirteenth century. Migrants of that time arrived in Kongu carrying new elements of culture from the plains; there is also evidence to suggest that these most recent migrants may have been encouraged and assisted by the threatened Chola, Kulottunga III.[154] These later migrants brought more of the established elements of plains culture, especially Vedic temples and *brahmadeya*s, institutions which were at that very time under considerable pressure in the coastal plains; in addition they brought notions about and experience with such cultural and social forms as temple towns and the division of castes into those of the right and left.[155]

The focus of much of the society and culture of Kongu Vellala castes was upon four chieftainships which may have risen by the later Chola period. These four families of chiefs, called *paṭṭakkāran*, bore titles allegedly conferred at that time, and in two cases at least early evidence in support of these claims are found. The four houses of chiefs are: the Palaiakottai *paṭṭakkārar* of the *payira* clan of Kongu Vellalas; the Kataiyur *paṭṭakkārar* of the *poruḷantai* clan; the Putur *paṭṭakkārar* of the *seṅkaṇṇaṉ* clan; and the Sankarantampalaiyam *paṭṭakkārar* of the *periya* clan. The first element in their titles (e.g. *paḷaiyakkōṭṭai*) refers to the village centre of the chieftainship; all are located in the central part of Kongu. Clan (*kulam*) designations of these chief's families appear in the earliest documents in which they find mention, and the modern functions of the clan organization upon which these chiefs' houses are based is given considerable attention by Brenda Beck in her recent work on Kongu peasant society.[156]

[154] *See* Arokiaswami's argument on this in 'Social Developments under the Chōḷas', *T.A.S.S.I.*, 1956-7, pp. 3-4.

[155] *Kongu Country*, p. 278.

[156] Beck, op. cit., pp. 41-2. She refers to these chiefs as 'titled families' and as an 'aristocracy' whereas the *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 4, p. 2419, gives as one meaning 'title holders' meaning by that the possessor of a revenue *paṭṭa* in British usage; the *Lexicon*

Her reports from contemporary informants as well as her references to vernacular histories of the Kongu Vellala (or Kavuṇdar) community on the antiquity of the four families of chiefs are supported by inscriptional and literary evidence going back to the sixteenth century. Two inscriptions of the time of Mallikarjuna of Vijayanagara refer to the Payira clan chiefs as *koṅgaveḷadaraiyar* (chiefs of the Kongu Vellalas),[157] and the eighteenth century *Kongumandala-Śatakam* of the Jaina-Brahman Karmegakkavinar refers to the *kāṭaiyūr* chiefs of the *poruḷantai* clan and the *putūr* chiefs of the *seṅkaṇṇan-kulam* renown for having received the title of *mummuḍi-Pallavan* from a Chola king.[158] These several chieftainships of the dominant cultivating castes of Kongu not only provided political focuses, an expression of their political primacy among cultivating groups in this area, but they linked even these remote Tamil cultivators to a kingly centre in the Kaveri.

Gangavadi, like Kongu, is a relatively dry tableland girded by mountains which served to preserve its isolation until Chola times. However, this territory achieved considerably greater political prominence than Kongu because, around the fourth century, there emerged a minor kingly lineage calling itself Ganga. This line of rulers persisted in southern Karnataka for almost six centuries. Though the Ganga kings were not unique in claiming a connection with Aryavarta, their persistent support of and possibly their personal commitment to Jainism sets them apart from most other ruling families in South India.[159]

Gangavadi was the oldest, largest, and best developed of the three ancient territories of central and southern Karnataka. The other two were Nolambavadi and Banavasi. Nolambavadi formed the north-eastern boundary of Gangavadi, north of the north Pennar river and extending to the Tungabhadra. It was settled by sedentary cultivators long after the Ganga country when, around the eighth century, Tamil warriors called Nolambas associated with the Pallavas of Tondaimandalam established their control there.

also gives the meaning of headman of Tottiyar and Kongu Vellala castes. The notion of chief would seem to fall between these meanings.

[157] *A.R.E.*, 1920, nos. 235 and 239.

[158] *koṅgumaṇḍala-śatakam of kārmēgakkaviñar*, ed. T.A. Muttusāmikkonar, Madras, 1923, verses 51, 53, 72.

[159] On the question of Jainism *see* S. Śrikantha Sāstri, *Early Gaṅgas of Talakāḍ*, published by the author, Bangalore, 1952, pp. 44-9.

Banavasi, to the north-west of Gangavadi, was even later to emerge as an important area of peasant agriculture; it was a small territory and of lesser political significance.[160] Though most of the period to the eleventh century when Chola power was established in Gangavadi, Ganga rulers dominated their two near neighbours in the manner of medieval Indian states, that is, little was done to diminish the local authority of its subordinate families of chiefs.

The prime orientation of the Ganga chiefs was not to northern Karnataka, where political dominance was exercised by the Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas and whose subordinates the greatest of the Ganga chiefs were, but to the south and east. Early in the history of the family, Ganga chiefs, as allies of the Chalukyas, raided the Pallava country of Tondaimandalam on its eastern border. At that time, Ganga power was greatest in the east, on the edge of Tondaimandalam, where the mountain fortress of Nandidrug, at 5000 feet, provided a base for predatory operations.

Later, the centre of Ganga power shifted westward to Talakad on the Kaveri, and in the late eighth century, under the chief Sri Purusha, the Ganga capital was Manne or Manyapura, some thirty miles from modern Bangalore.[161] From here, later Gangas pressed upon their southern neighbours in Kongu. Butuga and his son Marasimha provided the model of kingship for Kongu chiefs who adopted Ganga symbols of kingship. But, beyond that influence, later Ganga rulers, soon to be displaced by Chola influence,[162] laid the basis for a new line of rulers, the Hoysalas. The latter came to control Gangavadi in A.D. 1116 and changed its name to to *hoysaḷarāja*.[163]

Derrett's judgement of the six centuries of Ganga rule is somewhat harsh. He states that after the impressive reigns of Butuga and Marasimha,

> Gaṅga affairs . . . sank back into the state of comparative insignificance which had been normal before Butuga's time, when the central and

[160] B. Lewis Rice, 'Gaṅgavādi', *Commemorative Essays Presented to Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar*, Poona, 1917, pp. 237-8; J.D.M. Derrett, *The Hoysaḷas: A Medieval Indian Royal Family*, O.U.P., Madras, 1957, pp. 12-13.

[161] *See* S. Srikantha Sastri, *Early Gaṅgas of Talakād*, Rice, 'Gaṅgavāḍi', p. 239.

[162] Derrett, op. cit., p. 14. Parāntaka I, Uttama Chōḷa, and Rājarāja I raided eastern Ganga country in the late tenth century; Rajendra I took Talakad in A.D. 1004.

[163] Rice, 'Gaṅgavāḍi', p. 248.

> southern parts of Karṇāṭaka country were remarkable for no distinctions in the fields political, literary, architectural, or religious. Moreover, from the small number and often illiterate character of the records that survive it may be judged that the general level of prosperity was very low compared with the succeeding centuries, and it may be safely assumed that the historical obscurity that surrounds much of the Gaṅga period is due very largely to the backward condition of the majority of its subjects.[164]

In becoming the central domain of the Hoysala state of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Gangavadi ceased to be a peripheral zone of the Chola segmentary state. But, in order to be the Hoysala central domain, Gangavadi had to possess population and wealth upon which to base such a powerful state. Thus, one must alter Derrett's assessment of the Gangas and Gangavadi prior to Hoysala times to the extent of recognizing that while the Gangas did not match the Hoysalas in the quality and power of the state or in literary, architectural, or religious accomplishments, theirs was a territory which could sustain the excellence of the Hoysalas. In any case there is no evidence that the Hoysalas did anything dramatic to enrich the land that they gained from the Gangas and that sustained them. Derrett makes no mention of intensive irrigation development under the sponsorship of the Hoysala state, nor was there even the more modest irrigation development which can be demonstrated for the Cholas and the Vijayanagara rulers later.[165] The many localized irrigation schemes developed during the age were the work of locality folk in the *nāḍs* under their headmen, the *nāḍgāuṇḍa*s, just as it was elsewhere in the macro region.[166] Indeed, the very lacklustre of the Ganga rulers who preceded the Cholas and Hoysalas suggests that they were essentially peasant chiefs who neither sought nor managed to break their ties with the dominant peasant folk of the territory. That peasantry still identifies itself with the ancient Ganga designation; they are called, *gaṅgadikara*s who in 1891 comprised forty-four per cent of the total population of the land-controlling peasantry of Mysore State (i.e. Vokkaligas).[167] Gangadikara is a slight contraction of the term *gaṅgavāḍikara*, 'men of the Gaṅga country'.[168]

[164] Derrett, op. cit., p. 14.

[165] See his chapter seven on administration and his analysis of revenue which indicates no irrigation charges.

[166] Dikshit, op. cit., pp. 41, 46, 52.

[167] Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, v. 1, p. 125.

[168] Rice, 'Gaṅgavāḍi', p. 237.

The Gangadikara peasantry of Gangavadi appears to have been more significantly linked to the Kongu peasantry to the south than to peasant peoples in the central and northern parts of medieval Karnataka. Similarly, the Marasu Vokkaligas of eastern Bangalore and central and southern Kolar districts appear to have been linked to Tondaimandalam. Chola inscriptions are heavily distributed over the three modern districts of Mysore, Bangalore, and Kolar, the core of Gangavadi.[169] One of these Tamil inscriptions, that of Mulbagal taluk, Kolar, dated A.D. 1072, relating to the interaction of Tondaimandalam peasants of the *valangai* and those of modern Kolar (then 'Sri Rajendrachola Eighteen Countries') was discussed at length above.[170] It may have been just such ancient connections as those between the peasantry of Ganga country and of Kongu which persuaded the Hoysala Ballala II (Vira Ballala) to fish in the troubled waters of Chola country in A.D. 1218. His son, Narasimha II (Vira Narasimha) established Hoysala power in the lower Kaveri at Kannanur (near Srirangam, Tiruchirapalli district). Derrett calls this action an 'aberration' because it prevented the establishment of a 'Karṇāṭaka national empire' that Derrett believed to be a 'proper conclusion to the period of upheaval which had preceded the rise of the Hoysaḷa'.[171] Such an assessment of the Hoysala incursion into the lower Kaveri must be judged a modern historian's 'aberration' which sees nationalism as a factor, a 'natural force', in an age to which it was wholly inappropriate. It was rather the rich Kaveri delta, exposed by the weakened and divided Cholas, which offered the best potential for Hoysala power. The Gangavadi 'homeland'[172] of the Hoysalas, after all, opened not to the northern territories, bleak and troubled, but to the rich delta of the Kaveri which inevitably tied southern Karnataka to the Tamil plain.

The *Kārmaṇḍala Śatakam*, possibly of the seventeenth century, fortifies the presumption of linkage between the peasant peoples of southern Karnataka and those of Kongu and the Tamil plain.[173] The work of a Kongu Vellala, Araikilar, this *śatakam* describes the

[170] *Supra*, chap. 3.

[171] Derrett, op. cit., p. 105.

[172] Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, v. 1, p. 106 *passim* uses this expression.

[173] Madras, 1930, with a commentary by P.A. Muthuthandavaraya Pillay.

country of the *kārāḷar* peoples as composed of two parts: rich plains (*poḻil-nāḍu*) in the east and hills (*varai-nāḍu*) in the west.[174] Kārmandalam, or *gaṅgapāḍi* was bounded by these western hills and the ocean on the west and 'Pallavam' (i.e. Nolambavadi), 'Kadamba' (i.e. Banavāsi), Tondai, and Kongu.[175] The territory included the Coorg Hills (Kudaku-malai), the Pushpagiri-Subrahmanyam Hill (of Uppinangadi taluk, South Kanara), the Pennai (N. Pennar) and Kaveri rivers, and it consisted of thirty-two *nadu*s in the western hill country, and sixty-four *nadu*s in the plains (verse 7); the commentator on this *śatakam* suggested that the ninety-six *nadu*s of Gangavadi account for its being called a '96,000' country.

Verse forty-five of the *śatakam* states that *gaṅgapāḍi* was known as *mummadichōḷa-maṇḍalam* as well as *mahilāsura-nāḍu*. The latter name is the slightly altered *mahisasura-nāḍu* (to become ('Mysore-nadu'). *Muḍikoṇḍacholа-maṇḍalam* was the common name by which the Cholas referred to Gangavadi whereas *mummaḍichōḷa-maṇḍalam* usually referred to northern Lanka.[176]

Kārāḷar means 'ruler of the clouds' and is thus the same as *kārakkātar* as in the sub-caste title, Karkatta Vellala.[177] The goddess Chamundi, whose shrine is in modern Mysore City, is said in the *śatakam* to have provided the Karalar cultivators of this country with rice seeds for their fields (verse eight), and another famous town, Tagadur, or Dharmapuri, in modern Salem, north of the Toppur divide, was also included in the Ganga country (verse eleven). Verses thirty-one to thirty-three state that the Karalar are of the Ganga people who include the *vīrattiyar* (Jainas) in the western hill country and *śrōttiyar* (worshippers of Siva and Vishnu) in the eastern part. They are progeny of the powerful Ganga chiefs, and (verse forty-six) the *śatakam* ridicules the notion that Rajaraja the Great conquered *kārmaṇḍalam*; rather, his rule was sought because of his famous devotion to the Lord Siva.

[174] *Poril* means forested or park land; *varai* means mountainous. *DED*, nos. 3723 and 4315.

[175] Because the Nolambas were understood to be a branch of the Pallava family, Nolambavadi was referred to by that title (Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Mysore Tribes and Castes*, v. I, p. 99 n); similarly, Banavasi was also designated by its great warrior family, the Kadambas (Dikshit op. cit., p. 16 and G. Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula; A History of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka*, Bombay, 1931).

[176] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 472, 173.

[177] Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, v. 3, pp. 249-50.

Finally, verse forty-eight states that the Karalar rule the people of Ganga, Kongu, and Kalinga; the last-mentioned reference is to the Eastern Gangas of Orissa.

Setting aside the bravura of the *śatakam* genre, the *Kārmaṇḍala Śatakam* helps to define the southern Karnataka country as one linked to the segmentary state of the Cholas. Rajaraja I's conquest of southern Karnataka — including Gangavadi, Nolambavadi, and Taigaivadi (modern Mysore district) — came by the sixth year of his reign, A.D. 991. The Chola conquerors came through Kongu, and this was clearly a part of the consolidation of the Chola overlordship in the western peripheral regions. In early tenth century records from Gangavadi, Ganga chiefs are said to recognize Rajaraja's rule.[178]

IV

The Political Culture of the Chola Segmentary State.

The structure of the Chola segmentary state — its central, intermediate, and peripheral zones with their differentially segmented internal divisions — was not explicit in the numerous inscriptional records nor in the various genre of literature of the age. It is an inferred structure. Lacking an explicit, relevant, contemporary theory of the state, it has been necessary to suggest another formulation to organize the existing political facts of the age. The most appropriate of alternatives is the theory of the segmentary state proposed by Southall.

As argued above in the discussion of the structure of the Chola segmentary state, effective territorial sovereignty of the Cholas was confined to the rich, populous core of the Kaveri delta. Beyond this sub-region, Chola sovereignty was an increasingly ritual hegemony as the peripheral zones of the state were approached. The core territory of the Cholas included the following six deltaic territories: *pāṇḍi-kulāśami-vaḷanāḍu*, including Tanjavur; *nitta-vinōda-vaḷanāḍu*; *arumolidēva-vaḷanāḍu*, also called *teṉ-kaḍuvāy* or the territory south of the Kaduvay River; *kshatriyasikhāmaṇi-vaḷanāḍu*, also called *vaḍa-kaḍuvāy* or the territory north of the Kaduvay; *uyya-koṇḍar-vaḷanāḍu*; and *rājādhirāja-vaḷanāḍu*.[179]

[178] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 174-5.

[179] Venkayya, 'Territorial Divisions of Rajaraja-Chola', *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pt 5, pp. 21-9.

The names of these territories were epithets of Rajaraja I, fixing upon the entire core region an identity with the ruler which was as clear in purpose as the great shrine he built at Tanjavur. The special relationship between the Chola rulers and their central domain, the Kaveri core, and the role of the Rajarajesvara temple together distinguish Chola country from the other major segments of 'zones' comprising the state. The two features are symbolically linked in a variety of ways.

In the origin myth of the Chola family, primary emphasis is placed upon the Kaveri region and symbolic connections established among a number of elements which were to remain important throughout the history of the great Cholas. This myth occurs in a Sanskrit inscription of A.D. 1070 recording a grant in the time of Virarajendra Chola to the shrine of the goddess Kanya-pidariyar at Kanya Kumari.[180] After a lengthy iteration of the solar dynasty with which the Cholas linked themselves (verses 4-27), a series of verses (28-35) relate an episode modelled upon the *Ramayana*. Here, an eponymous Chola warrior who roamed the Gangetic forests in carefree hunt was, like Prince Rama of Ayodhya, deceived by a demon in the guise of a deer and led southward from Aryavarta. The warrior slew the deer on the Kaveri and while there looked for Brahmans upon whom to confer gifts. Finding none, he settled some Brahmans from Aryavarta who recognized the Kaveri as a river of even greater sacredness than the Ganga.[181]

Important in this mythic account are three elements: the putative Aryan connection of the progenitor of the line, the dedication to Vedic, or at least Brahmanical rites leading to the introduction of Aryan Brahmans, and the superior sacredness of the Kaveri. As the learned editor of the Kanya Kumari inscription, K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, notes, the Cholas were not a northern people. Nor is it any longer possible to accept the idea that the Brahmans of medieval South India were primarily descendents of early migrants from the north even though there was a continuous movement of small groups of North Indian Brahmans into the south during ancient times.

[180] K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, 'Kanya Kumari Inscription of Virarajendra', *T.A.S.*, v. 3, pt 1, no.34, pp. 87-158. The grant portion of this long inscription consists of barely twenty lines of Tamil.

[181] Ibid., p. 96.

The myth of Gangetic origin is rather to be understood as an effort to place the Chola kingship upon a basis of legitimacy superior to that which could be claimed with equal validity by Pandyans and by warriors of the Chera country. This was no easy task considering the continued currency of the titles *mūvēndavēḷār* and *mummuḍi*, held by chiefs recognizing all of the three ancient kingships of the macro region. In addition, such a claim of Gangetic provenance was appropriately antecedent to, or supportive of, the royal cult to Siva which came into existence during the time of Rajaraja.

The notion of territorial sovereignty fortified by religious associations is scarcely unique with the Cholas; similar associations involving the conception of Aryavarta were made by kings of the Gangetic plain at the time[182] and are a basic element of sacral kingship of time. In addition, however, the conception derived from two processes in South Indian medieval Hinduism. These processes came to be joined during the Chola period and provided the foundation for the royal Siva cult centred upon the Rajarajesvara temple. Both processes may be identified during the Pallava period, and it is to the credit of Rajaraja's political acumen that they were incorporated into the state system which he created.

The first process was the revival, or more accurately, the establishment of worship of the Vedic Siva as the major form of high ritual in Tondaimandalam under the sponsorship of the Pallavas. Shrines in the central plain which had previously housed Jaina and Buddhist images were reconsecrated to the *mahadēva* (Siva) almost always represented by a linga, called *mahēśvara*, and under the custodianship of Brahmans. Later Pallava inscriptions and temple remains in Tondaimandalam verify that this was a non-puranic, aniconic form of worship.[183] The conception of deity and ritual here is one congenial to a continuing accommodation to Jaina and Buddhist forms (e.g. the sixty-three Jaina great souls and Saiva *nāyaṉārs* and perhaps accounts for the ease with which some of the early Saivite and Vaishnavite saints of the *bhakti* movement and their illustrious converts could switch allegiance from the 'heretical faiths' to Vedic deities.[184]

[182] K.M. Munshi's 'Foreword' to *The Age of Imperial Kanauj* (A.D. 750-1000), v. 4 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, ed. R.C. Majumdar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964.

[183] K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 60.

[184] K.V. Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, Amudha Nilayam

The second religious process was of another kind. This was the devotional (*bhakti*) worship of the puranic gods Siva and Vishnu, primarily a movement in the Kaveri region. Bhakti hymnists in the Kaveri did not so much contend against the Aryan heresies of Jainism and Buddhism — though their judgements of these sects was often harsh; it was more the vigour of devotion to female tutelary deities that moved them. The major male deities of the ancient religion of Tamils proved to be easily transformed into appropriate Vedic, male guises.[185] But, certain of the great goddesses and the many village goddesses (*grāma devatā* or *ūramman*) of ancient worship were more difficult to assimilate. Nambi Arurar, one of the three early Saivite saints whose works form an important part of the *Devaram*, treats the goddess theme with respect and appreciation but more in aesthetic, than devotional terms and, in any case, he viewed female divinities quite clearly subordinate to, dependent upon, and inseparable from Siva.[186] In time, as has been shown, goddesses were also assimilated to the Hinduism of the age, as the consort of one of the puranic gods, and worthy of separate worship in her *kāmakōṭṭam*. But this did not occur until the thirteenth century as a general feature of the religion of the macro region.

Crowning these broad developments of the Chola age and contributing to the sacral significance of the Chola domain in the Kaveri was the Siva cult of the Chola rulers. Here, the work of Suresh is germane. In his analysis of the inscriptions and iconography of the Rajarajesvara temple at Tanjavur, Suresh has made a strong presumptive case for the existence of the deliberate 'propogation of canonized religion in Tamiland' by the Chola kings.[187] While he cautions that more detailed study of this hypothesis is necessary, the main outlines of this argument are persuasive.

Private Ltd., Madras, 1959, pp. 186-94.

[185] Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 21. Also, in the *Tolkappiyam*, a grammatical work of the late Classical period, there was already an association of Vedic gods with the traditional five landscapes: *mullai*-Mayon-Vishnu; *kuriñji*-Seyon-Siva; *marudam*-Vendam-Indra; *neydal*-Varuna; *pālai*-Durga (Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., pp. 8-9).

[186] M.A. Dorai Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Tēvāram*, 2 vols, University of Madras, Madras, 1958, pp. 210-23, 244.

[187] Suresh, 'Raajaaraajeesvara . . .', pp. 449. Also, G.W. Spencer, 'Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, v. 12, pt 1 (January 1969), pp. 42-56.

At Tanjapuri, which had never before the time of Vijayalaya enjoyed the status of a sacred place[188] and at which the founder of the great Chola line constructed a modest temple to the goddess Nisumbhasudani,[189] Rajaraja chose to create what he must have intended to be the greatest Siva shrine in South India. 'The temple', as Nilakanta Sastri has stated, 'was altogether a creation of Rājarāja's policy'.[190] From the architectural point of view, Rajaraja certainly succeeded; but his success was as great in having created a symbolic shelter for and the incorporation of the puranic Siva. In the Brihadisvara temple at Tanjavur were established a full display of the manifestations of not only the puranic Siva, but representatives of other Vedic and puranic deities: Surya, Vishnu, and Brahma.[191] The female principle of deity — the preponderating one in the continuing popular religion as well as in earlier forms of high religion[192] — was reduced to a single category of *umāparamēśvarī*s, consort deities of the major representations of Siva.[193] Of the few non-canonical male deities, only one, Aiyan, is even mentioned in the inscriptions of the temple.[194]

It is Suresh's contention that the Cholas instituted a deliberate policy which he speaks of as 'aryanization'. He means by this that an effort was made by Chola rulers, especially Rajaraja I, not to incorporate the deities — mostly goddesses — worshipped by Tamils, but to displace these cults. Suresh sees this effort as a sharp break from the previous religious history of the Tamil country which he briefly examined.[195]

[188] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 184-5.

[189] Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Art*, p. 43.

[190] *The Cōḷas*, p. 185. It is interesting to notice that if any ancient sacredness could be assigned to Tanjavur it was in association with Vishnu, not Siva. According to a purana cited by Jagdisa Ayyar, op. cit., p. 87, the name Tanjavur is said to be for the demon *(rākshasa)* 'Tanjan' who was overcome by the lord Vishnu as Nīlamēgaperumāl.

[191] Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', pp. 438-9. Also *see* J.M. Somasundaram, *The Great Temple at Tanjore*, Madras, 1935.

[192] See the discussion of temples in various tenth century reigns of Cholas in Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., pp. 43-80, 86-229. Also, *see* Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', p. 441, where the prominence of such deities as Pidaris, Kadukais as well as Durga, Jyeshtha and others are mentioned.

[193] Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', p. 439.

[194] Ibid., p. 442.

[195] See, especially, his section entitled, 'Temples', pp. 124 ff and 328-32, as well as his essay, 'Raajaraajeevara . . .' *Proceedings of the First International Conference*

Evidence of Classical times indicates to Suresh, as to others, that, notwithstanding the presence of Brahmans and some Vedic ritual performances, the ancient deities of the Tamils remained dominant.[196] These deities, the most important of whom was Murugan, the mountain god, overshadowed the Aryan deities Siva and Vishnu to whom reference is made but the worship of whom, if it occurred, was subordinate to that of the Tamil gods. Suresh sees the period from the Classical period to the advent of the Pallavas, *c* A.D. 200-500, as one in which Aryan religious forms — Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanical cults of Siva and Vishnu — co-existed with localized Tamil cults. This view has already been suggested above and is quite standard in South Indian historiography. Along with others, Suresh bases this view upon the two contemporary epics, the *Manimekalai* and *Cilappadikaram,* though he appears to have reservations about the degree of harmony among faiths depicted in these works. Some religious strife, he believes, marred relationships among the 'aryan' faiths, and this conflict, according to Suresh, may have deepened owing to the political disorders of the time. It would appear that by the onset of Pallava rule both Buddhism and Jainism had suffered serious setbacks, not so much extirpated by as merged with Brahmanism which triumphed during the Pallava period. What the Pallavas began after the fifth century A.D. in utilizing state power to establish Aryan cults under the control of Brahmans, the Cholas continued and vigorously expanded after the ninth century. Sanskrit learning was encouraged, and this provided the mythic sources of elaborate Aryan cults to the detriment of more ancient Tamil religious cults.

Suresh's findings regarding the influence of the Aryan gods under the Cholas are impressive. Information on 174 temples of the Kaveri basin is analysed. Of these, many are shrines of the major deities of the Vedic pantheon, pre-eminently Siva, but several are dedicated to Vishnu and, somewhat unusual, four to Brahma.[197]

of Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, 1966, pp. 437-50.

[196] The degree of dominance conceded varies among scholars, however; Aryan and non-Aryan elements are seen as fused by Nilakanta Sastri (*Development of Religion in South India,* pp. 32-4), whereas George Hart sees Tamil elements as predominant at this time ('Ancient Tamil Literature; Its Scholarly Past and Future', in Burton Stein (ed.), *Essays on South India,* The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1975, pp. 41-64).

[197] This analysis is less than perfectly clear since there are no tables nor clear categories for classification. The Brahma temples include: the *brahma-kūṭṭam*

Siva shrines existed in a variety of forms. Some were devoted to Siva in his principal agamic manifestations: e.g., Chandrasekara, Kailasamudaiyar, or Karanisvaram. But most Siva shrines were simply identified by the suffix *-īśvaram* just as most Vishnu shrines were identified by the suffix *-viṇṇagaram*. *Īśvaram* temples constituted the largest single category among the 174 temples examined by Suresh (49 of 174 temples).[198] A substantial number of these, almost half, were temples named for a Chola king or queen (22 of 49); the remainder of these *īśvaram* temples were named for Siva directly or for a goddess associated with Siva. The next largest category of shrines (28 of 174) were named after locality deities such as Allur *nakkaṉ* or Mullur *nakkaṉ*. *Nakkaṉ*, according to Suresh, was a way of indicating a Siva deity in the time before the great Cholas; the term ceased to be important after Rajaraja I.[199] Suresh noticed that temples named after places constituted a sizable portion of the total, 24 of 174 shrines. The term *ūr*, in this usage, Suresh regards as a way of designating village deities. But since most *nadu*s were named after villages (*ur*s) and since in some cases the term *nadu* is also used, the assumption here is that such deities were locality, rather than simply village, deities.[200]

The various ways of naming temples during the Chola period are significant. Relatively few of the temple inscriptions examined by Suresh refer to a Vedic deity — some agamic name for Siva or Vishnu or their consorts. The overwhelmingly large number of shrines are identified either with Chola royal titles or with place names, and it is these two categories which provide an important basis for Suresh's 'aryanization' interpretation. In considering the first category, Suresh, quite properly, attaches special importance to the prototypic royal shrine, that of Rajarajesvaram at Tanjavur. This central temple structure bears inscriptions of the great ruler's twenty-ninth year (A.D. 1014), but refers to endowments of the period from A.D. 1009 to 1014 to the main Vedic deities, Brihadis-

at Tanjavur and *brahmīśvaram* temples at Tanjavur, Perunagar, and Tirukkalukkunram. The first three of these are of the time of Rajaraja I, the fourth is of the time of Kulottunga I, *HCGESI*, p. 25.

198 Ibid., pp. 124-30.

199 This is supported by the findings of Karashima and Subbarayalu (op. cit., p. 13) where 85 per cent of those bearing the title of *nakkan* were found in Cholamandalam and, of these, around the same proportion occur in inscriptions prior to Rajaraja I.

200 Suresh, HCGESI, pp. 124-5, 130.

vara and Chandesvara.[201] Most images, however, are those of Siva as Dakshinamurti, Lingapurana, Atavallār, Rishabavāna and Ardhanāri. Consorts of Siva are represented by the general image, Umāparamēsvari. There are a few images representing the Chola royal family and some of the *nāyaṉārs* (Saivite hymnist-saints).

What is suggested to Suresh by the Tanjavur temple is the following:

> When a person takes the Raajaraajeesvaram inscriptions. . . into consideration and analyses the images kept for worship. . .the natural conclusion he arrives at is that the religion presented . . . is purely canonical and highly aryanized and is the representative picture of the religion existing in the country at the time.[202]

Or, again,

> Rājarājēsvaram marks the stage, when the canonical pantheon was just nearing completion, when the non-canonical gods, goddesses and temples found it difficult to survive the new pantheon and when important ancient religious centres like Ārūr, Aiyāru, and Venkādu began to survive as Tiruvārūr, Tiruvaiyāru, and Tiruvenkādu after canonizing themselves. In short, Rājarājēsvaram marks the stage of, and is the concrete presentation of the canonical religion only, with Siva as its head. Having consolidated his empire, and with [re-] sources and time at his disposal, Rājarāja I could methodically present the new Cōla pantheon, to be developed by his successors.[203]

Why Rajaraja I pursued this course is not explored by Suresh except as he notes that a 'reason for the success of the Cōla pantheon during and after Rājarājēsvaram', was that canonical temples like it, '. . . handled the economics of the country. . .'[204] Such a factor is made much of by Chola historians,[205] but none appear to come as close as Suresh to the supposition that the economic factor may have been uppermost in the motives of the Chola rulers. That this great temple and others of the Chola period had important economic functions is, of course, undeniable; they were large,

[201] Texts and translations in *S.I.I.*, v. 2.

[202] 'Raajaraajeesvaram . . .', op. cit., p. 439.

[203] Suresh, *HCGESI*, p. 299.

[204] Ibid., p. 300.

[205] E.g., Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 654, or even more extremely, in Nilakanta Sastri's essay, 'The Economy of a South Indian Temple of the Cola Period', *Malaviya Commemoration Volume*, pp. 305-19.

complex institutions required to care for a large staff of temple servants and pilgrims. But, it is doubtful that these institutions — which were after all not numerous in Chola country — did more in economic terms than to manage their own complex operations. They cannot have been created to serve or displace economic functions which existed prior to their creation.

Suresh's studies and many of his arguments are about canonical gods favoured and supported by the Chola rulers and, as he would have it, thrust upon those whom they ruled in opposition to those deities whom the latter had long venerated. He observes, quite correctly, that what we are permitted to know of religion during the Chola period comes from documents (inscriptions) from canonical temples alone.[206] It is primarily through a variety of indirect references that other forms of religion of Chola times can be seen.

Using these indirect references of the Chola period and the few, scattered inscriptions which date from the pre-Chola period, Suresh discusses what he calls, 'non-canonical' religions, in terms similar to Whitehead and others: deities are most often female; male deities, when they rarely occur, are essentially tutelary deities. Contrastively, canonical deities are male, Siva or Vishnu or consorts, and they have no territorial attribute — they are universal. In the pre-Rajaraja I religion of the Tamils, temple nomenclature is seen to correspond with these differences. Two terms for shrines occur in the pre-Chola and early Chola inscriptions: *kōil* and *taḷi*. According to Suresh, the former (from the Tamil root, *kō*, or 'king') is used for shrines of goddesses or for shrines bearing the name of a village or locality. *Taḷi*, from the Sanskrit, '*sthalī*' or sacred place, is almost always attached to toponymic shrines of either gods or goddesses. The suffix *-īśvaram* predominates in references to temples established in the post-Rajaraja I period and signify, for Suresh, the full 'canonization' of the deity. As Suresh states it, these terms

> tell the history of the temples in a very simple way. *-Kooil* represents the earliest stage, *-taḷi* the second stage represents the introduction of Brahmanic elements converted to suit native usage, and *-iisvaram* the final stage speaks of the domination of canonized temples.[207]

Suresh's inventory and classification of temple inscriptions of

[206] Suresh, *HCGESI*, pp. 328 and *passim*; 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', op. cit., p. 439.
[207] *HCGESI*, p. 441.

the Chola period has clarified much about the religious system of the age. Some of this bears upon the question of territorial segmentation, for his analysis reveals the widespread vitality of essentially localized shrines devoted to female deities — *piḍāris* and *kāḍukāls*. These were tutelary cults enjoying the devotion and patronage of people of the locality. We know little of the ritual of these places, but many of such shrines must have been under the ritual supervision of Brahmans as well as non-Brahman specialists. Among the goddesses worshipped at some of these shrines were such 'canonized' deities as Durga and Jyeshtha which points to some participation of Brahmans learned in the puranic-agamic tradition.

It is Suresh's view that these localized cults underwent changes during the early Chola period. Some shrines in the vicinity of Tanjavur, he believes, were forced to send many of their male and female staff to serve in the great temple as a result of which these shrines apparently ceased to function.[208] At other shrines, goddesses which were the object of local cult worship were transformed into Umaparamesvaris and thus linked to Siva. This ended their careers as independent, place deities. Suresh sees this incorporation of tutelaries, rather than their complete neglect, as a necessary compromise of the canonicalists with the prevalence of female deity worship; he notes that ultimately the place of goddesses was maintained through their continued popularity as consorts of the *mahādevā* as exemplified in the continued popularity of the goddess Brihadnayaki, the consort of Brihadisvara, at Tanjavur.[209] Thus, the drive to establish canonical forms of religion by Rajaraja I and his successors was not wholly successful according to Suresh. Female deities continued to be worshipped, possibly in ancient ways, despite the changes in their mythic character; goddess shrines were shortly after to be erected in the precincts of temples devoted to Siva and Vishnu; ancient male deities of the Tamil pantheon — Aiyan and Murugan (as Subrahmanyam) were also honoured by shrines within the walls of the great temple at Tanjavur and those elsewhere.

But, is it appropriate to consider, as Suresh does, that another

[208] Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', op. cit., p. 443: '. . . most probably these temples died a death of starvation. . .'

[209] 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', op. cit., p. 450.

purpose of Rajaraja I for imposing canonical religion was to expunge 'native usage', as he puts it? Here, there is some confusion. At one point he argues that by Pallava times '. . . due to some force, the native and Aryan [Brahmanical] faiths combined and got inseparably blended, and powerful enough . . . to fight the other two faiths [Jainism and Buddhism].'[210]

Yet, he appears to see Rajaraja's policies of 'propagating the canonical religion',[211] and his 'pressure of canonization'[212] directed against 'native usage'. The issue does not therefore appear to be 'aryan' or 'canonical' religion against non-aryan Tamil or non-canonical religion, for, as he points out, the religion of Tamil country was significantly, perhaps completely 'aryanized' centuries before Rajaraja. What appears to have been in process in the policies of the Chola overlords was the attempted incorporation of localized cults into a religious order linked to the royal cult of Siva. This attempt seems to have been quite successful. Therefore, Chola religious policies are not to be understood as arising from economic purposes nor from the presumed zeal of Rajaraja and his successors, to expunge existing forms of ritual affiliation, but from a political design calculated to encompass independent and localized cultic affinities within an expanding Chola hegemony. The incorporation of local place and caste tutelary deities was one form of ritual sovereignty in which the lesser gods of local chiefs and places honour the god of the king and the god of his realm.

The Tanjavur temple dedicated to Siva as Brihadisvara was built during the late years of Rajaraja's reign, and most of the records inscribed on the sides of the main shrine are his; only a few belong to the time of Rajendra I and Kulottunga I. Of Rajaraja's inscriptions, all are of the twenty-ninth year of his reign which was possibly the last year of his rule.[213] The entire effort — construction of the temple, recruitment of its staff, provision of income and ritual implements, and, finally, preparation of the lengthy and elegant inscriptions — was carried out in a short time, presumably under great pressure from the now old king. Each

[210] *HCGESI*, p. 331.

[211] 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', op. cit., p. 450.

[212] Ibid., p. 443.

[213] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 183. Suresh notes that an epigraph collected in 1953 (370/1953-4) is dated in Rajaraja's thirty-second year; ('Raajaraajeesvara . . .', p. 450 n).

of these factors contribute to the sense of deliberateness, even urgency, of the undertaking.

The forced development of the temple is evident from yet other features. The shrine belongs to that small class of temples which had no pretension to ancient sacredness; it was not mentioned among the hundreds of places cherished and celebrated by Saiva hymnists, and the chronicle of the temple (*sthala purāṇa*) does not even bother to invent an ancient sanctity. Like other temples possessing instant sanctity, the god is revealed in a dream. According to the *Brihadisvara Mahatmya*, the chronicle of the temple, the Brahman guru of Rajaraja related a dream to the king in which *īśvara* (Siva) appeared and advised that if the king wished to rid himself of a disease (black leprosy or *krishna kustha*) he should build a temple with a great tower to shelter a linga from the Narbada region called Brihadisvara.[214] The design features of the temple have been extensively noted by art historians and add weight to the argument. Unlike almost every other South Indian temple, it was created and executed to a unitary design. Quite apart from the striking effect produced by this, in contrast to the *mélange* of structures which clutter most temple precints, this feature points to the builder's purpose and determination. Also, this effort to create a stunning monument — and it was surely this which inspired the towering 190 foot central shrine surmounted by a huge granite sphere — was obviously not intended to supply a deficiency to the Kaveri region. There were already numerous impressive temples in the immediate vicinity, and at Chidambaram (Tillai) at the northern edge of the Kaveri core region was perhaps the premier Siva temple of the macro region.[215]

A further indication of the manner in which the temple was pressed to completion by Rajaraja was in the means of recruiting temple staff. This imperious incorporation of the servants of other gods of the region was a demonstration of dominance in the central domain of a ruler without parallel in South Indian history. Several lengthy inscriptions on the base of the central tower of the Rajarajesvari shrine inventory the personnel commanded by Rajaraja to fill the numerous and varied functions of the place. Three hundred celibate priests from two hundred villages; four hundred women (presumably singers and dancers, though Nila-

[214] Somasundaram, op. cit., p. 40; citing ch. 11 of the *purāna*.

[215] Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 65.

kanta Sastri calls them 'hetaerae')[216] drawn from every social stratum and from a large number of goddess shrines; musicians, male hymn singers, artists, accountants, watchmen, and armed guards: all were commanded to come to the temple from their named villages in the Kaveri core. Special streets (*talicceri*) were designated for their residence around the temple.[217] Income for all of these servants and the various kinds of ritual were elaborately provided for and recorded in inscriptions.

Wealth came from two sources. First, there was the treasure that Rajaraja had accumulated from his successful military campaigns in all parts of the macro region as well as Lanka. These predatory activities and the prizes produced by them are enumerated in the temple inscriptions; from this plunder came jewels to bedeck the images of the temple and gold and silver to be fashioned into ritual implements and ornaments. The second source of wealth has the appearance of being tribute gathered by the king from various territorial associations (*niyāyam*) of the Kaveri core territories. These were cash endowments deposited with the manager of the temple. Loan operations of these funds by the temple manager yielded a stream of income to support ritual.[218] The source of these cash 'gifts', the *niyāyam*s, are called 'regiments' by Nilakanta Sastri and most other scholars, named for the *vaḷanāḍu* from which they came.[219] The impression conveyed in considering *niyāyam* as 'regiments' of a centralized army, as is usually done, is that such temple grants were a redeployment of state funds. However, if the term, *niyāyam*, is taken in its more inclusive meaning of a group or an association of persons having similar functions, as other scholars have taken it, then the explicit military identification of the groups is weakened, and the money payments may be seen as tribute or even extortion commanded by the king from wealthy locality groups on the Kaveri core.[220]

[216] *The Cōḷas*, p. 653.

[217] *S.I.I.*, v. 2, no.69, pp. 312 ff. and no.70, pp. 328 ff.

[218] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 654.

[219] *The Cōḷas*, p. 454; K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *T.A.S.*, v. 3, p. 74, and Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .'

[220] Tamil Lexicon, p. 2258, *'niyāyam'*; *S.I.T.I., 'Glossary'* and D.C. Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* (Delhi: 1966), pp. 221-2 agree with the more inclusive definition. K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, in *T.A.S.*, v. 3, p. 74, in discussing a tenth century Succindram inscription notes that while the term *niyāyam* may often refer to soldiers, in the particular record and in most others it has a more inclusive meaning as an

Though considerable urgency appears to have been taken to complete the Tanjavur temple by it builder, construction was not completed at the time of Rajaraja's death. Suresh draws attention to this.[221] He notes that many of the incomplete parts of the structure had to await the attention of the sixteenth century Nayakas of Tanjavur, and he wonders why Rajaraja's successor Rajendra did not complete his father's work. One answer to this question is that the latter soon began major construction on his palace and temple at the new capital of Gangaikondacholapuram, but this only raises another query: why did Rajendra abandon the site which had served as the Chola capital from the time of Vijayalaya and which had been magnificently enriched by the great temple itself?

One answer to this question has already been proposed, that is, strategic considerations might have dictated the locational decision. Greater control over or defence of the Kaveri basin from the northern intermediate zones of Tondaimandalam and Naduvil-nadu could have been important. Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, it is possible that Rajendra's creation of a new capital is to be seen as an alteration of Chola kingship of a magnitude as significant as that witnessed in the Pallava kingship during the time of Nandivarman II. This change, initiated by Rajaraja, was the depiction of the king as a more complete secular representative of sacred authority, the head of a royal cult. Such a suggestion is fully consonant with the medieval Indian conception of kingship as Hopkins long ago pointed out and as already mentioned above.[222] This is the *avatāra* notion metamorphosed to apply to the king as a divine incarnation and dramatically set forth in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Support for the recitation of the epics was as popular among South Indian kings as among Northern ones. Moreover, as D.C. Sircar has pointed out, the Chalukyan kings of Badami appeared to be claiming just such a status in their use of the title *śrī-prithivī-vallabha* (or *śrī vallabha* or simply *vallabha*) along with their personal names, suggesting that they were incarnations of Vishnu (i.e., husband of *śrī* and *prithivī*).[223]

association. *S.I.I.*, v. 17, no.460 (429/1904) refers to *niyāyattar* as a general association.

[221] Suresh, 'Raajaraajeesvara . . .', pp. 449-50.

[222] 'The Divinity of Kings', *JAOS*, v. 50 (1931), p. 314.

[223] *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 337.

It is this aspect of sacral Hindu kingship which received its most elaborate development among the kings of South-East Asia. The Khmer king Jayavarman II of the early ninth century is regarded as the first to make use of the *dēva-rāja* (god-king) concept according to D.G.E. Hall:

> [Jayavarman II] took into his service a Brahman, Sívakaivalya, who became the first priest of the new cult which he established as the official religion. It was that of the Deva-raja, the God-king, a form of Sáivism which centred on the worship of the linga as the king's personality transmitted to him by Síva through the medium of his Brahman chaplain. The prosperity of the kingdom was considered to be bound up with the royal linga. Its sanctuary was the summit of a temple mountain . . . which was the centre of the capital . . . . the axis of the universe. . . . From his time onwards for several centuries it was the duty of every Khmer king to raise his temple mountain for the preservation of the royal linga, which enshrined his sacred ego. Thus arose the great temples which were the glory of the Angkor region.[224]

The god-king conception is one of the most perplexing elements in the still unclear relationship between ancient India and South-east Asia. It is the one element of 'Hinduized' kingship in early South-east Asia which cannot be found fully developed in contemporary India, though some features of the mature institution can be identified. While it would be inappropriate to attempt to deal conclusively with the matter here, it is possible to indicate a line of development in medieval South India which resulted in something close to the *dēva-rāja* institution of South-east Asia monarchy. This line of argument stems from the emergence of royal tombs or funerary temples in the macro region. As to the probable origin of this institution, the following statement by Balasubrahmanyam appears prudent:

> . . . we do not know whether (the '*personality*' or '*devaraja*' cults) had an earlier common origin or was an outflow from India or had an independent parallel development in the two regions (of South-east Asia and India). We have to suspend judgement till such time as we get more light on the question, and, meanwhile, rest satisfied with the knowledge that similar cults were in existence more or less in the same period in the lands bordering on both sides of the Bay of Bengal, though the *devaraja* cult of South-east Asia had its own peculiar development, with individualistic features of its own.[225]

A major element in the god-king conception of ancient Cambodia,

[224] *A History of South-East Asia*, New York, 1965, p. 93.

[225] Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 20.

Java, and southern Annam (Champa) was the royal funerary temple. Coedes used the terms 'funerary temple' and 'mausoleum' for temples in Java, Bali, and Ankor,[226] and long before him, a thirteenth century Chinese, Chan Ta-kuan, spoke of Ankor Wat as the tomb of the Chinese god of architecture, Lou Pan.[227] As tombs, these South-east Asian structures were believed to have received the ashes or body of the dead king for whose honour and in whose name the edifices were known. As temples, they sheltered a *sivalinga*, most commonly called Bhadresvara with which the king was connected.[228] Bhadresvara appears to have been the tutelary god of the kings of Champa[229] from at least the fourth century when the warrior Bhadravarman constructed a wooden temple in honour of the *sivalinga* Bhadresvara as 'the national shrine of Champa' according to Briggs.[230] Thus commenced 'the Cham custom of forming the name of the national tutelary deity by combining the name of the founder or reigning king with -ēsvara (=Siva), a custom which does not seem to have taken root in Cambodia until several centuries later',[231] Briggs also follows Coedes in attributing the first use of kingly suffix *varman* to this fourth century Champa king.[232]

The royal *sivalinga* tutelary Bhadresvara may have come into existence as Briggs assumed, that is, as a deification of the king Bhadra signified in the suffix *īsvara*. However, a Bhadresvara *sivalinga* existed contemporaneously in India. Religious seals bearing this linga are seen in the fourth or fifth century A.D.[233] There is no suggestion that this Indian *sivalinga* was connected to a royal cult, as in Cambodia, nor is there other evidence of such a connection during the Gupta period or later, until, perhaps, Chola times. The identification of kings with Siva appears thus to have

[226] Cited in Lawrence P. Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, Philadelphia, 1957, p. 204.

[227] Ibid., p. 203; B.R. Chatterji, *Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia*, Calcutta, 1964, pp. 206-14.

[228] Chatterji, op. cit., p. 72; other references to Bhadresvara: pp. 37, 99, 147, 172, 215, covering a period from the late ninth to the middle of the fourteenth centuries.

[229] Briggs, op. cit., p. 15: 'patron saint of the Chams'.

[230] Ibid., p. 25.

[231] Ibid., p. 24.

[232] Loc. cit..

[233] J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 182-3.

been a South-east Asian phenomenon, but the *sivalinga* as an element of South-east Asian kingly tradition may have been transferred from India to South-east Asia during the Gupta period.

The *sivalinga* at Tanjavur, Brihadisvara, is not of the classic and well-known ones. The name does not appear among the many listed in the standard iconographic works of T.A. Gopinatha Rao or Banerjea.[234] Moreover, the form of this *sivalinga* is distinctive. It is a very large, wide column, and the name *bṛihād-* probably is a reference to its massiveness.[235] Massive lingas exist at relatively few South Indian temples, and the Brihadisvara *sivalinga* is found at only two temples: Rajaraja's temple at Tanjavur and Rajendra's temple at Gangaikondacholapuram.[236]

Popularization of public linga worship and thus the appropriateness of the *sivalinga* as an element of a royal Siva cult in South India was a relatively late development. It does not appear much before the sixth century.[237] Sankaracharya, the great Siva teacher, may have contributed to its increased importance pursuant to the assimilation of popular sex cults into Hindu orthopraxy as P. Thomas and others have suggested.[238] Another probable factor in the popularization of public linga worship may have been the prevailing use of columns or upright stones in the ancestor worship of South India.[239] Both of these factors — sex cults and phallus worship as well as the established use of the stone pillar in ancestor rites — help in an understanding of the major royal shrines at Tanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram. Both shrines were religious centres which emphasized canonical forms of Siva worship, but they combined with this the powerful elements of ancestor worship of the massive linga and the focus upon the royal house as cult centre through the worship of the dead king at his *paḷḷippaḍai* or *samādhi* shrine. The massive *sivalinga* incorporated both developments symbolically.

The Brihadisvara temples at Tanjavur and Gangaikondachola-

[234] *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Paragon Book Reprint Corporation, New York, 1968; originally Madras, 1914, v. 2, pt 1; Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 454 ff.

[235] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 735. The *bṛihātsaṁhita* of Varahamihara, a sixth century work on images and lingas, discusses the *brihat* form; a translation of a portion of which is found in Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 579-89.

[236] Banerjea, op., cit., p. 463; Jagdisa Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 63, 87.

[237] *See*, 'Dravidians', *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, v. 5, p. 12.

[238] P. Thomas, *Epics, Myths and Legends of India*, 8th ed., Bombay, n.d., p. 69.

[239] Banerjea, op. cit., p. 463.

puram were funerary temples, that is, shrines dedicated to the dead. Though images of the dead were expressly proscribed in many of the texts governing ritual practices, the installation of memorial portrait statues was resorted to by the Chola family prior to Rajaraja's time. Balasubrahmanyam noted a Siva temple at Solapuram (Vellore taluk, North Arcot) of the late ninth century which is called a 'Siva temple' (*īśvara-alayam*) as well as a 'tomb' (*atīta gṛiham*).[240] This shrine was apparently erected over some royal personage. Later, the Chola queen Sembiyan-Mahadeviyar, wife of Gandaradityadeva and mother of Uttama Chola who preceded Rajaraja I, installed a portrait statue of her husband at the Koneri-rajapuram temple which she erected.[241] The installation of portrait images by Rajaraja and his sister in the Tanjavur temple had precedent therefore, and Rajaraja is known to have established *paḷḷippaḍai*s at Melpadi in Tondaimandalam for the Chola Arinjaya, son of Parantaka I[242] and at Tondaiman-Arrur, near Kalahasti as a memorial to Aditya I.[243] But the personal cult characteristics at Tanjavur were deepened by the inauguration there of recitations and dramatic presentations based upon Rajaraja's life. The drama *rājarājēśvara-nāṭakam* and the eulogistic poem (*kāvya*) *rājarāja-vijayam* were performed at times of festivals, according to the inscriptions of the temple. Unfortunately, no extant versions of these works have survived so it is impossible to say more about them.[244] Moreover, as George Spencer has pointed out,[245] the frescoes of the Rajarajesvara central shrine — notable art works in their own right — contain a painting of Siva in the warrior pose of Tripurantaka. Sivaramamurti commented on this depiction of the god Siva, as conqueror, and Spencer underscores the suggestive relationship to the conquering king, Rajaraja.[246]

The importance of funerary shrines of the tenth century, prior to the time of Rajaraja I, may have stemmed as much from the need

[240] Op. cit., p. 20.

[241] *A.R.E.*, 1927, para. 13; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 142, 152, 452-3.

[242] *A.R.E.*, 1927, para. 14; Arinjisvara temple.

[243] *T.A.S.*, v. 3, pt 1, p. 111; Asityēsvara temple. Discussing this shrine in a recent work on Chola temples, Mathuram Bhootalingam has referred to the funerary function as a 'Buddhist practice', *Movement in Stone: A Study of Some Chola Temples*, Somani Publications, 1969, p. 16.

[244] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 663-4.

[245] Spencer, 'Religious Networks and Royal Influence . . .', p. 50.

[246] Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations*, p. 6.

to clarify the line of succession as to honour a dead king. The period of Gandaraditya and Arinjaya (*c.* A.D. 956) was one of considerable political confusion when different kings were mentioned for the same period.[247] At times none were mentioned at all. Thus, there were a series of contemporary inscriptions from Tondaimandalam, complete in all ways, including Saka dates, but failing to mention the ruling king. The epigraphist who edited these records surmised that for at least a decade there was much uncertainty in the central plain about which of various members of the Chola family was ruling, or whether any was.[248]

No ambiguity surrounded Rajaraja's tenure. It would therefore seem that the purpose of the Tanjavur temple as a funerary shrine, a place where Chola rulers were given the status of 'divine beings.' [249] as well as the centre of the royal cult, was related to other efforts by him to use canonical religious forms to extend the scope of Chola royal authority within and beyond the Kaveri domain.

Given the obvious and effective power of Rajaraja and his successors in their Kaveri central domain, it cannot be supposed that the royal Siva cult was simply for the purpose of securing the Kaveri basin under Chola control. The royal cult, the prominence of brahmanical forms, and the network of Brahmanical institutions in the intermediate and peripheral zones of the Chola state is best viewed as a means by Chola rulers to affect ritual hegemony over the numerous locality chieftains of the macro region. Each of the latter exercised effective and legitimate rule (*kṣatra*) over a greater or lesser territory at the beginning of Rajaraja's reign and most continued to enjoy that power throughout the Chola period. What Rajaraja and his successors perfected was a conception of dharmic incorporation which did two things: it strengthened Chola authority and it provided locality chiefs with stronger ritual or symbolic bases for their own local rule. Both objectives depended upon sharing in the brahmanically-centred canonical system fostered by the Chola rulers and centred in Tanjavur. The particular means adopted by Rajaraja and his successors to convert older forms of local legitimacy of chiefs, first seen during Pallava times, into a consistent and regular system based upon the ritual supremecy

[247] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 142-3.
[248] *A.R.E.*, 1927, para. 14.
[249] Ibid..

of the Chola rulers were very successful. Each local chief, his power based upon the internal organization of his locality, came to acquire a ritual competence related to the ritual supremecy of the Chola rulers.

The means of articulating the ritual sovereignty emanating from Chola kings and extending over local chieftains must be examined. This examination is guided by the propositions advanced by Professor Southall dealing with administration and adminstrative staffs which linked parts of the segmentary state to the whole through the manipulation of ritual elements.

In reviewing the administration of the Chola segmentary state, it is necessary to recognize the importance of sacred symbols. Rajaraja I brought two processes of religious change together in a royal cult with the purpose of providing an enhanced, if not a new, dynamic element of ideological integration to the political order of South India. In this, he made astute use of individual as well as communities of Brahmans who, operating from their unique settlements, as part of an overarching ideological framework, knit together far-flung and diverse peoples of the southern peninsula. Here, rather than in any putative centralized and bureaucratized state, is the genius of Rajaraja seen and appreciated. In his continuous, at times massive, support of canonical deities, Rajaraja raised Brahmans of the broad territory in which his influence prevailed to a new peak of esteem and social power. Perhaps not since the age of the Brahmana texts, when the great *śrauta* sacrifices dominated high religious ritual, did Brahmans enjoy the patronage they had under the Cholas. It is true of course that the religion of the Chola age was no longer based upon the sacrificial rites of the Later Vedic age, but was now a religion of temple worship and personal devotion in which the intercession of Brahmans was weakened. But, in return for this diminished sacral power, Brahmans, at least in South India, attained a degree of secular authority not previously held.

That secular power was not just a result of royal design and support. It was based upon the patronage of local chiefs, some of ancient lineages of chiefs, but most of ordinary peasant stock, long the source of locality leadership in South Indian society. During the Pallava age, Brahmans and peasants established close interdependencies based upon mutual benefits; the Chola period saw this alliance flower to the full extent of its possibilities. Most

*nadu*s came to possess at least one *brahmadeya* where some forms of sastric learning and the devotional worship of puranic deities were carried on. The *nattar*s, as the sponsors of these activities, probably never sought and certainly did not achieve the exalted status of *yajamāna* warriors of the Later Vedic age. But these peasant locality leaders did enjoy prominence, precedence, and a degree of interaction with Brahmanical learning and ritual — adopting much of this culture as their own in their public and their domestic behaviour — which separated them from the lower status groups of local society. With Brahmans, these dominant peasant groups maintained a tradition of Tamil learning which is solidly evidenced in the great writers of the age who were Vellalas, such as Sekkilar, author of the *Periyapuranam*; with Brahmans, also, as the Saiva Siddhanta movement of the thirteenth century made clear, some among these locality peasant groups cultivated the highest competence in Sanskritic knowledge.

The ideological framework of Chola ritual hegemony is analysable in terms of concrete institutions and the essentially administrative processes revolving around them.

The keystone of the system of ritual hegemony was the royal Siva cult. Chola kings, or kingly centres, were the most obvious source of the canonical emphasis upon which was based the culture of the Chola segmentary state and, to a large extent, the vast territorial sphere of its influence. Temples dedicated to vedic gods — primarily Siva — greatly multiplied during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and these institutions were focal points in the network of Chola hegemony. Many of these temples sheltered gods bearing the name of Chola kings, and most bore one or more of the long, standardized inscriptions of the reigning Chola king. The Brihadisvara temples of Rajaraja at Tanjavur and Rajendra at Gangaikondacholapuram were unique in their size and artistic qualities, fitting symbols of a powerful, sacred kingship. Moreover, in their canonical character and their procedures of worship, they were models for the hundreds of temples erected in the two centuries of Chola rule. For the many older temples which were enlarged and renovated, these premier temples were also models. Consider the impact of just one architectural element established at the Gangaikondacholapuram temple. There, an impressive symbol was created to connect the temple with the sacred Ganga. Rajendra constructed a tank which was

called, 'a liquid pillar of victory (*jalamayastambha*)' and named Cholaganga to commemorate his 'conquest' of the Ganga. This tank was created of water brought from the sacred river which had been carried in pots from the north. These pots of Ganga water were supposedly stored temporarily at places of rest as they were carried to Tamil country, and at each such place, a *gaṅgamaṇḍapam* or hall for the water, was constructed.[250] At the same temple, images were installed which were quite different from those usually seen in South India at the time. Brahma and Agni were depicted as old men, bearded and pot-bellied, as they were iconographically represented in contemporary northern India and in contrast to the youthful forms these deities usually took in South India.[251] Siva was depicted in the form of Lakulisa, a form most popular in Gujarat and Kalinga, but also important at the important Siva shrine of Tiruvorriyur in northern Tondaimandalam.[252]

Rajendra seems to have been drawn to the important Siva centre at Tiruvorriyur. This shrine was celebrated by the *nāyanār* Appar who visited there in the seventh century,[253] and Sankaracharya is said to have performed a miracle upon the goddess of Tiruvorriyur similar to that which he performed with the presiding goddess at Kanchi, Kamakshi. Hearing that the Tiruvorriyur goddess was fierce and that she demanded animal and human sacrifices, Sankara is said to have converted her to *bhakti* forms.[254] While purged of some unacceptable ritual elements, Tiruvorriyur continued as a centre of Pasupata Saivism against which there was much contemporary inveighing.[255] This temple was the centre of an order (*saṁpradāyam*) devoted to the Soma Siddhanta or Pasupata school of Saivism under a line of teachers with the title of Chaturanana Pundita. One of the gurus of this line, born of a family of chiefs in Kerala, rose to a high post of advisor to Rajaditya,

[250] Sivaramamurti, op. cit., pp. 22-3.

[251] The distinctions between northern and southern iconographic forms are discussed in the *bṛihatsaṁhita* in Banerjea, op. cit., p. 583 and in Gopinatha Rao, op. cit., v. 2, pt 1, p. 92.

[252] Sivaramamurti, op. cit., pp. 23-4, 27, *The* Raman, *Early History of the Madras Region*, p. 195.

[253] Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, p. 13.

[254] Ibid., p. 196, where the suggestion is made that the offending goddess was destroyed, though it is still worshipped.

[255] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 648-9.

son of Parantaka, before becoming a member of the ascetic order.[256] Rajendra maintained close relations with this Pasupata *matha* as evidenced by two inscriptions of A.D. 1012 and 1043[257] which record the celebration of the birthday of the king and refer to temple construction he sponsored at Tiruvorriyur.[258] Later Cholas also continued this association with the Pasupata teachers as well as following Rajendra in his grants to Brahmans who recited Vedas there.[259]

Close association of the Cholas with distinguished Brahmans was made a prominent issue in the inscriptions of the time of Rajendra and Kulottunga I. In a number of records, Chola kings are said to have conferred grants upon Brahman supplicants while dining. According to the Karandai Plates of Rajendra I, the king was dining in a hall at Chidambaram when he was asked to make a grant by a high Brahman official.[260] In another of Rajendra's grants this is also mentioned,[261] and Kulottunga I is also described as dining when he made a gift to Brahmans while in Kanchi.[262] These references to dining are peculiar since inscriptions are usually free of such mundane factual information. Occasionally, a king may be reported to have issued orders for a certain grant while 'in camp' at some place, but this reference was usually in the context of praising recent military victories of the king. The appearance of the king being in a situation of intimacy with religious leaders, *brahmadeya* leaders, or some Brahman in his service is contrived. Considering the importance of food taking as a context for registering status relations, these references cannot simply be dismissed as a rare bit of verisimilitude in the inscriptions.

Relations of the Chola rulers with individual savants of high status and accomplishment such as the Chaturanana Punditas of Tiruvorriyur and the illustrious *brahmarāyan*s in their service were less important for the propagation of a standard royal ideology

[256] Ibid., p. 649, based on an inscription of A.D. 960; Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, p. 197.

[257] Raman, *The Early History of the Madras Region*, p. 197, referring to 104/1912 and 126/1912.

[258] Ibid., p. 198, citing a twelfth century inscription of Rajadhiraja II.

[259] Ibid., p. 228.

[260] *A.R.E.*, 1961-2, p. 12; the grant was made on the request of a *brahmarāyan*.

[261] Ibid., no.429, dated in the third year of the king and found at Uyyakondan-Tirumalai, Tiruchirapalli taluk.

[262] *S.I.I.*, v. 17, no.207, p. 74.

than the association of the Cholas with *brahmadeya*s and other corporately organized communities of the learned. In this, as in other things, the Cholas were following the precedent of the Pallavas who appeared to have maintained an interest and perhaps some control over centres of brahmanical learning in Tondaimandalam.[263] Such Pallava and, later, Chola policies have most often been understood by historians to be manifestations of the appreciation of Indian rulers for brahmanical learning for its own sake; it is otherwise seen as a means of demonstrating proper regal (*rājadharma*) behaviour in accordance with their claim to being of the solar line of Kshatriyas and thereby entitled to perform the Vedic Kshatriya ritual of the *aśvamedha* as allegedly done by Rajadhiraja, Rajaraja I's grandson.[264] However, these attributed reasons for Chola royal munificence to and association with the learned Brahmans and non-Brahmans undervalues the importance of the latter in maintaining the system of ritual hegemony of Chola kings.

*Brahmadeya*s were admirably suited to this purpose. Beyond the multifarious secular functions of these settlements and their complex internal and external relationships, *brahmadeya*s were the major points in the spatial network of Chola ritual hegemony. In these hundreds of settlements throughout the macro region, Sanskrit and Sanskrit learning were preserved and transmitted; here temples dedicated to canonical deities set the style of appropriateness in the worship of devotional Hinduism; here, finally, was the last asylum for cognoscenti and practitioners of the ancient Vedic religion which had all but been displaced by temple-centred devotional religion.[265] And, it must be remembered that *brahmadeya*s were not exclusively Brahman settlements. The only social group which was explicitly forbidden residence in a *brahmadeya* was the Ilava, those who tapped the coconut and palmyra palms for a fermentable juice ('toddy' in modern South India).[266] Apart from Ilavas, *brahmadeya*s were multi-ethnic settlements where peasants, artisans, and merchants, as well as Brahmans resided,

[263] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, pp. 11-12.

[264] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[265] Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, pp. 26-7 and *The Cōḷas*, p. 451.

[266] See for example, 'The Tiruvalangadu Copper-Plates of the Sixth year of Rajendra-Chola I', *S.I.I.*, v. 5, pt III, p. 437 and Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 578.

judging from the specification of and dues of these groups as residents of the Brahman settlements. Thus, while enjoying considerable and conspicuous self-government, the *brahmadeya* was not isolated from its rural context. On the contrary, it was in every way woven into the texture of rural society and ideally suited to its political function in the system of ritual hegemony managed by the Chola rulers.

*Brahmadeya*s of the Chola period had come to supersede the more ancient centres of learning, *ghaṭikā*s and *śālai*s; the functions of preserving and transmitting higher learning formerly associated with the relatively few such centres had for the most part come to be encompassed within, or better, diffused among *brahmadeya*s from the tenth century onwards. Even then, however, a few *brahmadeya*s continued to be distinctive for their institutions of higher learning: Ennayiram, Tribhuvani, Tirumukkudal, and Tiruvaduturai. It is hardly surprising that the pluralistic settlements governed by Brahman assemblies, *mahasabha*s, should have become the premier centres of higher learning during the Chola period. Apart from a few well-endowed temples, there were few other places which could have supported great learning. But, the proliferation of these centres of Brahman specialists of knowledge and ritual give an appearance of design which should be noted. Attention is again drawn to Rajaraja I as one who recognized the potential contribution which sastric and ritual scholars could make to the maintenance of the Chola state.

Very early in Rajaraja's reign, his third year,[267] a military campaign was launched into southern Kerala from which he emerged with the first of his long list of conquest titles — *mummaḍi cōḷa ḍēvar* (the Chola ruling the three kingdoms). He also claimed another achievement which was repeated by his successors, and this claim remains one of the oldest historical puzzles of the Chola period. The claim is contained in the phrase: *kāṇḍalūrśālaikkalamarutta*; it is found in the inscriptions of Rajaraja I, Rajendra Rajadhiraja I, and Kulottunga I. A reconsideration of this inscriptional phrase by T.N. Subramaniam suggests the possibility that the actions of Rajaraja and his successors at Kandalur, may not have been as important militarily as ideologically.[268]

[267] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 189, note 5.
[268] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, pp. 1-13.

The phrase has been read in two quite different ways. It has come to be interpreted by historians as, 'the destruction of the ships at the port (or roadstead, in the navigational sense) of *Kāṇḍalur* in *Vēnāḍu*'.[269] However, another interpretation of this phrase given by E. Hultzsch in the first volume of *South Indian Inscriptions* (1890) and by T.A. Gopinatha Rao in an early volume of the Travancore inscriptional collection.[270] The latter interpretation takes the word, *śālai*, which is in the now conventional interpretation understood as 'port' or 'roadstead', in its more common meaning as a 'hall', 'institution of learning' (c.f. *paṭha śālā*) or 'charitable institution'.[271] This latter meaning is more acceptable on two grounds. First of all, *śālai*, glossed as 'roadstead' or 'port' occurs in this phrase only within the corpus of Chola inscriptions; secondly, the meaning adopted by Hultzsch, Gopinatha Rao, and, more recently, Subramaniam is more sound linguistically.[272] *Śālai* is the *tadbhava* form of the Sanskrit word *śālā*, meaning: 'mansion' or 'building'. It is this gloss of *śālai* found in an important earlier inscription, one of A.D. 865, describing the establishment of a facility (*śālai*) for ninety-five learned celibates (*śaṭṭars*) said in the inscription to be like the *śālai* at Kandalur.[273]

The establishment of a *śālai* modelled after the one at Kandalur was at a place called Parthvasekharapuram near modern Trivandrum city; Kandalur is a part of modern Trivandrum.[274] Beneficiaries of this grant were advanced Vedic students, those seeking proficiency in three branches of Vedic study, and it was stipulated as a condition of admission to the *śālai* that each scholar have an adequate foundation in *vyākaraṇa*, *mīmāmsa*, and *paurōhitya*.[275]

[269] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 169, 189-90 and 222; K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan*, v. 1, pp. 246, 258; *S.I.I.*, v. 2, pp. 35, 47, 241, 250.

[270] *S.I.I.*, v. 1, p. 65, where Hultzsch provides the reading: '[the king] was pleased to build a jewel-like hall at Kāṇḍalūr; Gopinatha Rao, *T.A.S.*, v. 1, pp. 2, 10n; S. Desikavinayakam Pillai, *Kerala State Papers*, Srs. 2, pp. 100ff., cited in *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 2n, and discussed in *The Cōḷas*, p. 190.

[271] Proposed by S.D. Pillai as cited in *The Cōḷas*, p. 190, and *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3 pt 2, p. 2n.

[272] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, pp. 2, 10, note 22; Monier-Willians, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1067.

[273] 'The Huzur Office Plates', *T.A.S.*, v. 1, pp. 1-14.

[274] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 190.

[275] *T.A.S.* v. 1, p. 13; these terms refer to grammar, logic, and domestic ritual. J.F. Staal has noted that Veda recitations continued to be performed in Trivandrum,

Other provisions stipulated in the plates make it clear that this institution was a type of Vedic and Sanskrit school (*pāṭhaśālā*) in which the ninety-five scholars were not only to become proficient in Vedic studies and logic, but were also to gain competence in secular subjects. Thus, this institution was very like the *ghatika* at Kanchi to which the Brahman king-to-be, Kadamba Mayursarmam, went in the fifth century in order to acquire proficiency in *pravachana*, or recitation,[276] and, possibly also like the Kanchi school, the *śālai* at Parthivasekharapuram was not simply an institution of higher Vedic studies, but a school in which secular training was also important. This is suggested by several references in the Huzur Office Plates of A.D. 865. Among the requirements for appointment to the *śālai* was, that the *śaṭṭar*s possess competence in learning necessary for the affairs of the three kingdoms (*trairājya vyavahāra*). The secular learning may have included martial arts as there are references to fines for infractions of members of the *śālai* which included physical assault with or without weapons or wearing weapons to meetings.[277] A final provision in the grant strengthens the secular character, or at least the less than rigorous asceticism, of its nominally celibate members is the explicit exclusion of 'maid servants' or 'concubines' (*veḷḷāṭṭigaḷ*) from their quarters.[278]

The Tamil language Huzur Office Plates of A.D. 865 state at the outset that the new *śālai* endowed by the king Sri Karunandadakkan was established in conformity with the rules (*maryāda*) of Kandalur. The opening portion of the first plate reads in part as follows.

> The fifteenth day of the ninth year of (the reign of) the king Karunandaḍakkaṉ (being current) on this day, having acquired gradually from the Sabha of Miṉchiṟai, by granting other lands in exchange for the (plot of) land known as Uḷakkuḍiviḷai which belonged to them; letting (loose) an elephant round the land (for marking its boundary); raising on it a beautiful temple; setting in the temple (the image of) Vishṇubhaṭṭāraka and calling (the village) Parthivaśēkharapuram, the king Srī Karunandaḍekkaṉ made (established), in conformity with the rules of Kāṇḍaḷūr, a *śālai* for ninety [sic] five *śaṭṭars*.[279]

at the palace: *Nambudiri Veda Recitation* ('s-Gravenhage, 1961), p. 34.

[276] George Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, pp. 10, 15; *E.C.*, v. 7, Sk: 176, p. 113 of translations.

[277] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 13.

[278] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 13; *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 5.

[279] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 10. Note 22 here states that *salai* 'means a public institution

The clarity with which this is stated and the obvious meaning of *śālai* as a learned institution in this record argues against the continued acceptability of the conventional interpretation about destruction of ships at Kandalur. One reason for the conventional interpretation is that the phrases *kāṇḍalūr-śālaik-kalamarutta* occurs in Chola inscriptions among conquests claimed by the kings in the eulogistic introductions of whose inscriptions it is found.

In his review of the problem presented by the phrase and the Huzur Office plates of Trivandrum, T.N. Subramaniam offers an explanation which addresses the matter in a more convincing way. Considering the Huzur Office plates and other evidence of the importance of similar institutions of higher learning, Subramaniam concludes that the idiom of conflict and conquest connected with Kandalur was appropriate in the records of Rajaraja and his successors since it referred to a polemical contest between the king and learned men of the *śālai* resulting in the defeat of the latter and their submission and subsequent cooperation with the Cholas.[280] This is, of course, a classic kind of encounter in ancient India in which the defeated accept the view of the victor.[281] This idiom of conflict and conquest figures prominently in the hagiographical sectarian literature of the medieval period in which great saints and teachers subdue rivals in argument and earn their

of a charitable nature' and gives textual evidence in support; also noted is *tadbhava* form of word for the Sanskrit, *śālā*.

[280] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 11.

[281] King Janaka of Videha is an early example of such a victor. According to a *Śatapatha Brahamaṇa* tale, Janaka met several Brahmans, including the learned Yajnavalkya, and asked how each performed the *agnihotra* rite. Having heard each of the Brahmans, the king said that he considered Yajnavalkya's account the best and rewarded the latter with 100 cows, but only after saying that not even that most learned of Brahmans could tell what became of the two libations of the ritual. With that, Janaka drove off leaving several of the Brahmans chagrined that this *rājanya* had made fools of them and resolving to challange the king to a formal disputation. Yajnavalkya dissuaded the others from that course with the caution that if the Brahmans were to win, none would be impressed, for that is what was to be expected; but, suppose the king were to win! Yajnavalkya then ran to overtake the king and to obtain from him the correct answer. After receiving that answer, the Brahman sage resolved that henceforward he would ask the questions and listen respectfully to Janaka's answers. Janaka thereafter was a Brahman. *The Śatapatha Brāhmana according to the Text of the Madhyandina School*, trans. J. Eggeling, *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. M. Muller, v. 44, pt 5, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1963, p. 115.

support thereby. This sort of homage victory is what also occurred in the political sphere as well. Warriors defeated by others, like the Cholas, were permitted to continue their rule, but on condition that they recognized the supremacy of the Cholas. There is, thus, some reason for including Kandalur, which served as a model of learned institutions, among the conquests of several Chola kings.

But, it is possible to speculate beyond Subramaniam and suggest that the Cholas, like the Pallavas before them, took a strong instrumental interest in learned institutions such as the one at Kandalur in southern Kerala. Both dynastic lines sought to make these institutions useful to the states they were creating. It may indeed have been considered a 'conquest' to win to the services of the state the skills and prestige of previously independent learned men and institutions. In what manner the learned served the state can be little more than suggested in the present state of our knowledge, but there are two ways which may be proposed. One is in relation to the organizational forms and functions of *brahmadeya*s of the Chola period; the other is in the articulation of ritual hegemony in inscriptions and other public contexts.

Similarities between the forms followed in the establishment of the *śālai* at Parthivasekharapuram, according to the Kandalur rules, and the forms followed in the establishment of *brahmadeya*s in the Chola period are striking. The land involved in the new *śālai* was acquired gradually and through exchange with the Brahman settlement Minchirai (the modern village of Munjire)[282] in a manner followed in later times. The reference to the *sabha* of the latter village indicates that the *śaṭṭar* of the new settlement were different from those of the older village and the grant is emphatic in assuring the autonomy of the new settlement. In later times in the Coromandel plain, Brahman-governed settlements could and did include such specialized institutions of learning, such as the one at Ennayiram. Also described in the grant was the circumambulation of the land of the new settlement by an elephant; the establishment of a new Vishnu temple to the deity Vishṇu-bhattāraka; and the provision of cash and kind income to the temple and the *śālai* from peasants who worked the lands of each.[283] The grant concludes with the statement that the arrangements

[282] Some two miles distant from Parthivapuram (*T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 5).

[283] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 10.

stipulated were made according to the command (*ājñapti*)[284] of the headman (*kiḻavan*) of Tenga-nadu, the locality in which the new settlement was established.[285] The headman, one Sattan Murugan, was called a *veṇṇīr* Vellala, that is Vellala by birth.[286] Considering the secular concerns of the *śālai*s of Kandalur and Parthivasekharapuram, and the similarities of these with *ghatika*s elsewhere in the Coromandel region, it is fair to conclude they may have been a model for the kind of learned institution which would have had an appeal for Rajaraja and his successors.

But, there is more than a formal, organizational similarity between the *śālai*s at Kandalur and Parthivasekhara and the later brahmanical forms — including the *brahmadeya* — of the Chola period. An important further connection has been suggested between the *meykkīrtti*, or inscriptional preamble of Chola records and a particular literary form which appeared to have developed in the vicinity of Kandalur.

The literary form referred to here is the poetic epilogue (*paṭikam*); these were later additions to one of the early Classical collections of Tamil poetry, the *Patirruppattu*. With other poems of the Classical period, those of the *Patirruppattu* were collected in anthology form in perhaps the ninth century.[287] The title of the work means 'the ten-fold ten', a reference to its ten poems, each consisting of ten odes to particular kings of the ancient Chera, modern southern Kerala.[288] Courtly themes predominate in the odes; they celebrate the victories and the careers of heroic kings.[289] Long after the Classical period, each of these poems acquired an elaborate epilogue; these have been preserved in manuscript versions of the poems which also contain commentaries and explanatory notes.[290]

[284] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 133.

[285] *T.A.S.*, v. 1, p. 5, notes that there is a village called Tengapattanam near Parthivasekharapuram.

[286] Ibid., p. 13; *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 3779.

[287] Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, p. 25. Perundevanar who is given credit for the collection of these poems and others is considered by Nilakanta Sastri to have lived in the thirteenth century or after, not the ninth century (*History of South India*, pp. 111 and 381).

[288] J.M. Somasundaram Pillai, *A History of Tamil Literature*, Annamalainagar, 1967, pp. 170-1.

[289] T.E. Ghanamurthy, *A Critical Study of the Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, Coimbatore, 1966, pp. 2-3.

[290] Somasundaram Pillai, *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 170.

These epilogues have been compared to the Chola *meykkīrtti* by scholars of Tamil literature. K. Kailaspathy in his recent *Tamil Heroic Poetry* has written:

> While the precise relationship of the 'epilogues' [of the *Patirruppattu*] to the inscriptions of the Cōḻa period cannot be determined with any certainty, it is plausible that they were fairly close to each other in point of time [i.e., the ninth century]. Observing the remarkable resemblance between the *Meykkīrtti* of the Cōḻa inscriptions and the 'epilogues' . . . [one noted scholar of the Tamil Classical works][291] suggested with some reason that Raja Raja I, who was the first to introduce the *Meykkīrtti* as preferatory material in his inscriptions, might have commenced the practice after his invasion of the Cēral [Chera] country, where he came to know of the 'epilogues'.[292]

There were, thus, two features connecting that part of ancient Chera country which the Cholas called Venadu with important aspects of Chola culture: the *śālai* form as a possible model for the mature Chola *brahmadeya* and the colophonic epilogue as a possible model for the inscriptional *meykkīrtti*. The connections are suggestive, rather than conclusive. The *brahmadeya* institution itself cannot, of course, be traced to the deep southern portion of the peninsula, and *ghaṭikā*s were known elsewhere and particularly in the central Tamil plain near Kanchi where *brahmadeya*s also arose early. Similarly, the eulogistic preamble of the inscriptions may have developed independently of the epilogues later added to the Classical Tamil poetry of the Chera country. However, the coincidence of the assimilation of these two forms and their detailed similarity with those of Rajaraja's period and that king's invasion of southern Kerala is not easily dismissed. It is difficult not to see these factors, coming when they did, as vitally related to other developments which strengthened the brahmanical forms of the Chola period and the ideological evolution of the Chola segmentary state.

In support of this contention is the evidence of the increasing favour shown by the Cholas and those who modelled their public, political behaviour on the Chola rulers to Brahman learned men over non-Brahmans. The learned who were supported at the *śālai*s and *ghaṭikā*s in the period before Rajaraja may or may not

[291] Mentioned was T.V. Sadasiva Pandarattar in his work, *ilakkiya aracciyam kalveṭṭukalum* in K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, O.U.P., Oxford, 1968, p. 223n.

[292] Kailasapathy, op. cit., p. 223.

have been Brahmans. It is not clear, however, whether those who received the greatest favour during the period of the great Cholas were conspicuously, if not exclusively, Brahmans. That non-Brahman men with a profound knowledge of Sanskrit continued to exist we know from the thirteenth century Saiva movement, but it is difficult to ascertain their sponsorship. It has thus been necessary to follow the speculation of the epigraphist, K. G. Krishnan, that the term *kāṇimurrūṭṭu* in Chola inscriptions, may have referred to the support of non-Brahman savants by the non-Brahman *nattar*s. However, most Chola inscriptions are explicit in recording grants to Brahmans. This is the meaning conveyed in the suffix *chaturvēdimaṅgalam* attached to most *brahmadeya*s and in countless specific references in inscriptions. The Karandai Plates from what is now a suburb of Tanjavur are a rather remarkable instance of this feature. The Brahman recipients listed in these plates of Rajendra I numbered 1083 in all. They were for the most part Yajurvedins of the Apasthamba sutra. Of the total, 775 were Brahmans bearing the names of villages in modern Andhra (of whom 615 were Apasthambas); the remainder of the grantees were Tamil Brahmans, some following the Apasthamba and most of other ritual traditions. This was a massive infusion of Vedic scholars into the heart of Chola country.[293]

Brahmans, *brahmadeya*s, and great temples were the nodal points in the Chola ideological system of *rājadharma*; all were knit together by tens of thousands of stone and copperplate inscriptions. While unevenly distributed, the network of inscriptions carried to every part of the large territory of the Chola segmentary state evidence that their claim to ritual hegemony was recognized by locality chiefs, even very remote ones.

Most inscriptions must be viewed as a combination of ritual and control evidence. That is, stone and metal inscriptions were records which intended to present a particular understanding of relations among persons and institutions in the contemporary society as well as to provide a record of changes in the control over resources among persons and institutions. Inscriptions are rather easily analysed according to these two functions of ritual and control.

[293] K.G. Krishnan, personal communication, 1968 of draft manuscript on Karandai Plates.

The *Yajnavalkyasmriti* states that a charter or order for a gift (*dāna śāsana*), which was the most common category of inscription,[294] should include the genealogy and personal eulogy of the donor as well as a description of the gift and date.[295] The great majority of Chola stone inscriptions faithfully follow this form. Most provide a genealogical and eulogistical introduction (*praśasti* in Sanskrit, *meykkīrtti* in Tamil) a date given as the regnal year of the king, and a description, usually brief, of the gift. There are exceptions to this, of course. A stone inscription of Rajaraja at Tanjavur recording his gift of jewels for the deity devotes some 120 lines of Tamil to the jewels and their ritual uses in a text containing about 190 lines.[296] By and large, however, stone inscriptions refer most tersely to the gifts and dwell more upon eulogy for the donor. There is little question in the case of most *dāna śāsana*s of Chola times that each locality, and possibly each major settlement, maintained detailed records of the lands and personal services which had been granted as *devadana* to support temple worship, just as it is almost certain that temples maintained records of endowed lands, money, and animals, such as goats and cows, whose milk was used in ritual performances. The same would apply to Brahman settlements. Most gift records contain only sketchy descriptions of the gifts which occasioned their creation. Thus, the greatest saliency must be accorded to the ritual content of stone inscriptions which constitute the largest class of extant historical records possessed for the Chola period.

Copperplates (*tāmra śāsana*) differ from stone inscriptions in several ways. D.C. Sircar lays primary stress upon copperplate inscriptions in his discussion of Indian epigraphy even though, in South India at least, there are only a few hundred of these records extant while there are several tens of thousands of stone records.[297] Long before stone temples existed, Indian kings issued grants incised on copperplates.[298] However, in post-Pallava times, the number of stone inscriptions which have survived came greatly

[294] Op. cit., pp. 400-3 and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 103.

[295] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 190 and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 126 ff.

[296] *S.I.I.*, v. 2, no.93, pp. 428 ff.

[297] Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of Indian History*, p. 69.

[298] Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, notes that the Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hien reported that monasteries possessed plates allegedly dating from the time of the Lord Buddha. Sircar rejects this claim but acknowledges the antiquity of the use of copperplates (p.74).

to exceed those on copper. The view of some scholars that in every case a stone record was engraved, there was a copperplate version given to the grantee is difficult to accept from the sheer quantum of metal involved. Thus, it must be supposed that stone inscriptions came to displace copper inscriptions with the emergence of stone temples.

Still, copperplate inscriptions continued to be produced and for the South Indian historian these records have had fundamental importance. The following great plates of the Chola period form the basis for the firm chronology of the time: Rajaraja I's 'Larger Leiden Plates', 443 lines on twenty-one plates; Rajendra I's 'Tiruvalangadu Plates', 816 lines on thirty-one plates, and most spectacular, the latter's 'Karandai Plates', 2500 lines on fifty-five large plates (about sixteen by nine inches and weighing a total of 246 pounds without the seal-ring).[299] Most of twenty-two of the fifty-five plates of the Karandai grant are devoted to a eulogy of Rajendra I (1041 lines), one of the longest *praśastis* in existence. A substantial number of lines in the Karandai plates are given to the enumeration of the 1080 Brahman grantees of the new village which consisted of over 20,000 acres contributed by fifty-seven different villages. The new settlement was named *tribhuvana-mahādēvi-chaturvēdimaṅgalam* in honour of the mother of the king.[300]

Detailed attention to the beneficiaries of the grant is an important characteristic of copperplate inscriptions. Whereas stone inscriptions are often perfunctory in the description of the gift and its beneficiaries, stressing rather the eulogistic introduction, copperplates characteristically emphasize information pertaining to the gift and its recipients. It is little wonder, therefore, that some scholars have presumed that stone and metal inscriptions were complementary in function and assumed that for every one of the former a copperplate grant was retained by the grantee. Finally, as copperplates were in the possession of persons who were the

[299] Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 123-4. The plates are published respectively in: *E.I.*, v. 22, pp. 213 ff; *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pp. 383 ff; and *E.I.* in press, edited by K.G. Krishnan, Department of Epigraphy, Government of India. The Karandai Plates received brief mention by the epigraphist N. Lakshminarayan Rao, 'Some New Facts about Chōḷa History', *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, v. 19 (1950), pp. 148-57.

[300] Based on the typescript generously provided by K.G. Krishna, 1968.

beneficiaries of the grants recorded, these were more susceptible to alteration than the public stone records; they could also be forged more easily. For some historical periods, these disadvantages diminish the usefuiness of metal inscriptions for the historian; but that is not true of the Chola period.

Copperplate grants provide the best examples of the standard eulogistic preamble of Chola inscriptions. That is one reason why the great plates of the Cholas have been important for historical purposes. However, as T.N. Subramaniam has noted, Chola inscriptions differ from others:

> *Dharmaśastras* prescribe that the names of at least three generations of the donor, i.e., great grandfather, grandfather, and father of the donor. This rule is scrupulously observed in the earlier grants generally and the Sanskrit charters of the Pallavas are the best examples for this. Sometimes the military exploits and other eulogistic matters regarding them are also given. In some grants this genealogy is not limited to three generations, but is given for the entire ruling family from its founder. The copperplate grants of the Chāḷukyas, both the Eastern and Western branches, give the *praśasti* of their family in set verses which are added to with the accession of each new king. But in the Tamil inscriptions of the Imperial Chōlas from the time of Rājarāja I, and also of their successors, the Pāṇḍyas, the *praśasti* of only the reigning monarch is given in metrical form. This eulogy known as *meykkīrtti* in Tamil is more precise and historical, and consequently more reliable than the exaggerated poetical compositions of the Sanskrit forms. This *meykkīrtti* is different for each king and would increase in length as the reign progressed, new victories being added as they are gained. Even grammatical works on Tamil prosody, known as *pāṭṭiyal*, define the form of *meykkīrtti*. The name of the reigning monarch is given at the end of the *meykkīrtti*.[301]

Because there are relatively few copperplate inscriptions, only a few exist which record the same *meykkīrtti* as are found on stone inscriptions. One of these is the Virarajendra record at Kanya Kumari, discussed above in relation to the Chola origin myth. The same *meykkīrtti* is found, verbatim, in the Charala Plates of the same ruler in Vengi, at the opposite end of the macro region![302] The mobility and completeness of the copperplates suggest that the *meykkīrttis* recorded on them might have been prepared in a few places and disseminated to the localities around these places

[301] *S.I.T.I.*, v. 3, pt 2, p. 231.

[302] Nilakanta Sastri, *Sources of Indian History*, p. 69 and N. Venkataramanayya, *The Eastern Cāḷukyas of Vēngī*, Madras, 1950, p. 221.

for preparation as preambles of inscriptions on temple structures.

The most likely disseminating points for these inscriptional preambles with their genealogical, eulogistical, and mythical content were *brahmadeya*s though a temple centre like Kanchi might also serve as in the case of the Sanskrit portion of the 'Larger Leiden' plates which were prepared by five artisans at Kanchi[303] In these settlements were the literate men — Brahman and non-Brahman — to superintend the transcription of what may originally have come to them on more ephemeral material such as cloth and palm leaf. At such places there were also the skilled artisans to prepare the metal and incise the letters. And in the precincts of these settlements were the largest number of temples upon whose walls inscriptions could be placed and over the priestly custodians of which the *brahmadeya* residents would have had influence. In several of the copperplate grants — notably the 'Larger Leiden' plates and the Karandai plates — the procedure for preparing the plates from other, ephemeral documents is outlined.[304] Considerable time was necessary to complete the final record; in the case of the Karandai plates, the grant was made in October, A.D. 1019, and the plates were completed in August, A.D. 1021.[305]

If the surmise that the copperplates served as prototypes for the *meykkīrtti* portions of stone inscriptions is correct, the role of scattered communities of literate Brahmans and non-Brahmans in the technical maintenance of the system of ritual hegemony of the Chola segmentary state was very important. While the procedure of using copperplates as models for the ubiquitous stone records appears to have been followed by the Chalukyas and the Pallavas, as Subramaniam has suggested, the standardization of the *meykkīrtti* form after the time of Rajaraja represents a perfection of the procedure and the general administration of ritual sovereignty under the Cholas.

Administration of ritual hegemony under the Chola segmentary state was centralized in the ruling house. In the time of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I, particularly, but also during the time of their successors into the twelfth century, a deliberate and successful effort was made to superimpose over much of the southern peninsula

[303] *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 222.

[304] Three documents are referred to: *tīṭṭu*, *tirumugan*, and *aravolai* according to the Tirumukkudal inscription (Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 468).

[305] Krishnan, manuscript cited.

a new, or at least altered, ideological framework. The following ideological elements were salient: a royal cult of Siva created in which the shrine of first the Tanjavur capital and later that of Gangaikondacholapuram enjoyed special prominence and set the canonical style of temple worship for the entire macro region; hundreds of *brahmadeya*s were established throughout the central and intermediate zones of the segmentary state accompanied by impressive ceremonials at times jointly participated in by the Chola ruling house and locally dominant personages; and use was made of sastric Brahmans and other learned men to sustain a standardized symbolic system for which copper and stone inscriptions were the chief instruments.

Numerous inscriptions refer to ritual specialists attached to the royal household whose titles indicated that they were royal scribes. Documents prepared by these writers have often been construed as political directives through which the centralized political control of the Cholas was effected. This attribution by historians is hardly feasible since the only examples we have of the work of these scribal officials are ritual documents, not bureaucratic orders. It is thus more appropriate to see the work of such scribal specialists as part of a system of transmission of documents intended to incorporate the hundreds of locally powerful chiefs under the sacred umbrella of Chola kingship. The submission of the former to ritual dominance of the Cholas enhanced their own authority over increasingly pluralistic local societies.

Brahman and non-Brahman savants, scribes, and metal and stone artisans were all part of the system for maintaining and spreading the ritual hegemony of Chola rulers. Within the central domain of the Cholas, in the intermediate zones of Tondaimandalam and even the rebellious Pandya country and the more remote peripheral zones, the most minor, local chieftains supported and fostered this system. For, these local personages, along with Brahmans and other learned men, were major beneficiaries of the Chola ritual system of hegemony. By establishing *brahmadeya*s, centres of sastric learning and by erecting canonical temples, the learned and the locally dominant brought increased stability and prestige to their already well-established secular power as local chiefs. Possessing no impressive credentials for exercising dharmic rule, being themselves of peasant stock and thus not easily distinguished from other groups of dominant landed folk,

or *nattar*, the measure of legitimacy thus gained was important.

It is necessary to distinguish between two groups of persons who together constituted the major agents in the system of ritual hegemony and were major beneficiaries of that system. Brahmans and other learned persons while sometimes local men, were often brought to a locality and provided the means to cultivate their learned pursuits in well-supported settlements. To a life of learning and ritual activities, they added a somewhat minor function, administrative specialization. For the most part, their administrative tasks were limited to participation in public events at *brahmadeyas* and temples in which some gift was conferred upon those like themselves and in which the presence of the reigning Cholas was invoked to solemnize the gift. Brahman and non-Brahman learned persons might be involved in the preparation of the *dāna śāsanam*, deed of gift, to be incised on stone or metal for the recipients of the gift. With rare exceptions, ceremonies were arranged when gifts were conferred by local persons of wealth and status. Such grants were ostensibly for some future religious merit, but an immediate benefit of esteem accrued to the donor.[306] In all such transactions, the presence of the Chola house was felt, for almost every endowment carried a eulogistic reference to the royal house. It has already been noted, too, that there were regular recitations of eulogistical poems (*kāvya*) at the temples at Tanjavur and elsewhere.[307] Finally, there are numerous references to the elaborate ceremonials conducted in conjunction with grants to Brahmans and to temples, including an impressive procession, led by an elephant, marking off the lands granted. Here were contexts for a public recitation of the appropriate royal eulogy which was then recorded as the Tamil *meykkīrtti* on the inscription commemorating the grant.

Others whose participation was vital and whose wealth, directly or indirectly, made pious, public gifts possible were local men of power. The basis of their power and much of the legitimacy of their secular authority was membership in and leadership over the peasant groups of their localities. In most cases, management of a peasant locality was demanding and complex, for such local societies and economies could not be considered as patrimonial

306 According to early and medieval *dharmaśāstras*, the king acquired one-sixth of the spiritual merit of his subjects (Lingat, op. cit., pp. 211-12).

307 Tiruppundurutti temple was another place where this was done (Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 663).

properties to be operated by a lineage or 'brotherhood' as in some parts of India. These were complex, pluralistic units of social and political organization the control of which required impressive political skills.

To construe such locality leaders as 'administrators' serving the Chola segmentary state can only be true in a very limited sense. The right of such men to rule derived fundamentally from the internal constitution of each segmentary locality and the recognized dominance enjoyed by those called the *nattar*. It is of course true that such localized chieftainships was part of a larger political system. It is this consistent element which was established under the Cholas.

There were two ways in which men of standing and power in their localities served as 'administrative specialists'. One was in the context of ceremonies solemnizing arrangements pertaining to *brahmadeya*s and other eleemosynary activities. In these, they participated with Brahmans and presumably for the same purpose: to witness prestations, to enrich the solemnity of those occasions in which grants of land and other values were commemorated. At such times, they are called witness and might simply be identified by the title '*mūvēndavēḷār*' with their locality specified. It frequently occurred that both Brahmans and these locality rulers would come from quite distant places in order to participate in ceremonies. In the celebrated Parantaka I inscription at Uttaramerur, in which the complex voting procedure was stipulated, it is mentioned that one *tattanūr mūvēndavēḷār* was in attendance at the meeting of the *mahasabha* which promulgated the rules.[308] Tattanur is a village in modern Tiruchirapalli, almost 200 miles away from Uttaramerur.[309] Two years later, in perhaps A.D. 922, after the promulgation of the procedures mentioned above, further provisions were made in another inscription. This *rambainādu* in Cholamandalam, almost the same great distance from Uttaramerur in Tondaimandalam.[310] In the 'Larger Leiden' plates of Rajaraja I, about forty persons are mentioned as being involved in the execution of the grant at its various stages from being an oral order to the engraving of the final arrangements. Of these forty, five bore the title of *mūvēndavēḷār* and another

[308] Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, pp. 262-4.
[309] Cf. the Melappaluvur inscription of the tenth century, *A.R.E.*, 1924, no.367.
[310] Subrahmanya Aiyer, *Sketches of the Ancient Dekhan*, v. 2, p. 279.

fifteen persons are identifiable as non-Brahman notables, the remainder being Brahmans according to their designations.[311] Most of the Brahman and non-Brahman participants came from villages within a fifty mile radius of the newly established settlement of Anaimangalam (Nagapattanam). The titles of these forty persons from the various *valanadus* around *kshatriyasikhāmaṇi-vaḷānḍu*, in which the new village was located, indicate that their functions were scribal.[312] Designations such as *ōlai-eludum*, *mandira-ōlai-nāyakan*, and *karumamārayam* imply scribal functions.[313] The same designations and functions were specified in the Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra I which was almost contemporary with the 'Larger Leiden' grant of Rajaraja I,[314] the *praśastis* of both being drawn by the same person, Anantanarayana, Rajendra's court poet.[315] Thus, together with Brahmans, locality leaders from nearby, and at times from distant places, participated jointly, and it would appear, in interchangeable roles, in the ceremonies which conspicuously emphasized protection over royal and other centres which played a crucial function in the articulation of Chola ritual sovereignty.

The other, and truer, sense in which local, non-Brahman personages performed as 'administrative specialists' under the Chola segmentary state was within their localities. It was here that their proprietory *kṣatra* was exercised. They were the principal executors and trustees of grants made for the maintenance of brahmanical institutions which gave structure to the ritual network of Chola hegemony and their own sub-regal authority. This is again verified in great Chola plates. In the Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rajendra I, one Avaneri, 'of the fourth caste (*chaturthānvaya*), pure on both sides' is made responsible for carrying out the elaborate provisions of the grant which included leading the circumambulation of the new settlement by a female elephant (*kariṇī-bhramaṇa*); further,

311 *E.I.*, v. 22, pp. 235-6, 'List 'A'.

312 Ibid.; these include: Nittavinoda, Uyyakondar, and Arumolideva *valanadus* and the more distant one of *kār-nāḍu* in *rājendrasiṁhavālanāḍu*.

313 Ibid.; the editor of this inscription, Subrahmanya Aiyer, translates there terms as: 'Superintendent of Royal Writs', 'Secretary', and 'various tax registrars'.

314 The 'Larger Leiden' plates of Rajaraja I being posthumous (*E.I.*, v. 22, p. 222).

315 Ibid., and 'The Tiruvalangadu Copper-Plates of the Sixth Year of Rajendra-Chola I', *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pt III, no.205, pp. 383 ff; and especially the Tamil portion of the grant, pp. 428 ff.

it is stated that, having received the written order from various scribal functionaries, '. . . we the (chief) men of the district [nadu] went out (respectfully), received and placed (it) on (our) heads and accompanying the female elephant, walked around the hamlets.'[316] Or, according to the 'Larger Leiden' grant:

> . . . we the *nāṭṭōm* (i.e., the assembly of the district), seeing it (i.e., the order) being brought, respectfully advanced (towards) received and carried (it) on our heads and accompanying the female elephant, walked round the hamlets, set up stones and milk bush [as boundary markers] and drew up and gave the deed of gift.[317]

These and other grants of the time also include attesting signatures to the elaborate arrangements described in the grant records. Most signatories were residents of villages neighbouring upon the newly established Brahman settlement and contributors to the lands possessed by the new village. These witnesses are said to have accompanied the circumambulation procession and to have assisted in the final drawing of the document. In the 'Larger Leiden' plates from the end of Rajaraja I's reign, there were twenty-seven such attesting statements and signatures contained in the final part of the Tamil portion of the plates.[318] In later Chola times, the internal administration, or exercise of *kṣatra*, by these locality leaders became even more important when, as the *periya-nattar*, they spoke of themselves in the dharmic terms of protectors and managers of temples.

Pyramidal segmentation and Chola political culture.

According to theories of the state in medieval India, whether derived from puranic or sastric sources, society was prior to polity; social collectivities defined by kinship (*kula*), by shared and cooperative interests (*śreṇī*), and by common residence (*gaṇa*) are considered competent and responsible for the governance of their affairs, and the state, or more particularly kingship, was an institution whose function it was to maintain a social order comprised of such collectivities.[319] Kingly maintenance of the social order was achieved

316 'Tiruvalangadu Plates', *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pt 3, p. 389 and verse 132, p. 426; quotation, line 143, p. 430.

317 *E.I.*, v. 22, p. 259.

318 *E.I.*, v. 22, 'List B', pp. 237-8 and lines 207-330, pp. 263-6; also 'Tiruvalangadu Plates', *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pt 3 pp. 437-9.

319 Kane, op. cit., v. 3, pp. 280-1; Lingat, op. cit., pp. 246-8.

through the moral operation of royal justice, that is through *ad hoc* adjudication of conflicting claims by groups in society, thereby creating or protecting entitlements of groups through the dharmic protection of *daṇḍa*.

The pyramidally segmented society of medieval South India had developed a massing capability well before Chola times; *nadu*s possessed the attributes of *janapada*s characterized by corporate control over a tract of land by agricultural groups sharing a common ethnic identity, and artisan and trade groups maintained wide-ranging networks. These were autochthonous structures of social groupings in both the material and moral senses; they existed before the Cholas and persisted after them. Territorial chieftainships and primitive kingships facilitated some of the horizontal and vertical massing which is referred to in the Classical poetry of the Tamils. However, this political element was thin by comparison with the elaborate kingship of the Pallavas and the Cholas. Kailasapathy's analysis of themes in the *puram* poems discloses a fixation on martial prowess and warrior bravery by such political personages.[320] It is perhaps only after the time of Nandivarman II, Pallavamalla, that the chief, acting as agent for massing resources and the incorporative strategy of the Pallava kings, becomes significant.

Facilitating this massing and incorporative process of these South Indian kingships were inscriptions. Chola stone and copper-plate inscriptions are normative documents. They present a particular moral conception of society and polity, and are essential expressions of both. In idiom, inscriptions are puranic and sastric. Kings 'capture' and 'marry' distinctly powerful agents in ways that at once attest their royal might and magnify it. Rajendra I, according to his Tiruvalangadu Plates, took the river Ganga and held it in the Cholaganga tank constructed at his capital 'to sanctify his own country'; the name of his capital itself, Gangaikondacholapuram, commemorates this puranic conquest.[321] Rajaraja, Rajendra, and other Cholas, again in puranic style, spoke of being married to the goddesses of fortune, victory, and the earth.[322] Sastric ordinances are heeded in the form followed in inscriptions, and the Cholas refer to themselves as upholders of the dharma codified by Manu.

[320] Kailasapathy, op. cit., pp. 24-6.

[321] *S.I.I.*, v. 3, pt 1.

[322] Ibid., v. 3, pt 1, no.4, pp. 6-8 and *S.I.I.*, v. 1, no.67, p. 959.

Beyond these expressive features of inscriptions, these documents have an important sacrificial aspect; they record the processes and the results of sacred transformations. The process, or set of linked actions, which resulted in inscriptions of the Chola kings always involved a massing or pooling of human and material resources, often on a grand scale. These resources were drawn from diverse, independent, and at times, locally opposed elements in Chola society (e.g. from both *iḍaṅgai* and *valaṅgai* groups) for the general welfare of all in that society. Typically, this was a gift to a god or to Brahmans, and the presentation process was homologous to, and was very likely considered equivalent to, a sacrifice (*yajña*).

The conception of *dāna*, or gift, as *yajña*, or sacrifice, appears in early *dharamaśāstra*s. *Dāna* is seen to convey the same range of benefits to the donor as the sacrifice does to the *yajamāna*.[323] Manu and others equate the two as the principal aspects of religious life in the *dvapara-yuga* and *kali-yuga* respectively.[324] One of the *dharmaśāstra* elements yoking these conceptions of *dāna* and *yajña* is *iṣṭa*: what is sacrificed; what is given. Another linking element is *pratigraha*. This is the idea elaborated by Medhatithi, a major medieval commentator on Manu, to the effect that some gifts are distinguished (as *pratigraha*) in being 'offered with a view to some transcendental result, and received with due *mantras*'.[325]

In Chola inscriptions, kings are often, mistakenly, assumed to have been the actual *yajamāna* agents, or donors. This is quite incorrect. However, the invocation of royal protection for a gift transformed that which was given to the status of *pratigraha* and the donor to the status of a *yajamāna*. Inscriptions of the early Chola period of the ninth and tenth centuries even go as far as to call forth royal protection by the depersonalized titles of *rājakēsari* and *parakēsari*; presumably, this was as sanctifying as the elaborately eulogistic royal invocations of Rajaraja and his successors. And, since the invocation of the reigning king (even abstractly by the *rājakēsari* title) conferred upon the ruler some part of the merit

[323] Kane, op. cit., v. 2, pt 2, pp. 838-9.

[324] Ibid., p. 837.

[325] *Manusmṛti; The Laws of Manu, with the Bhāṣya of Medhātithi*, trans. by Ganganatha Jha, University of Calcutta Press, Calcutta, 1922, v. 2, pt 2, 'Discourse IV', p. 304. Also, Kane, op. cit., v. 2, pt 2, p. 842.

gained by the gift, every such gift increased the protective power of the king.

In all of this, Chola kings may be seen as having perfected means of incorporation under their royal aegis which the Pallavas had begun perhaps a century or more before.[326] The means used by Chola kings were not essentially different from those of the Pallavas, but they were pressed with greater energy and urgency. Thus, the Cholas followed the Pallavas in the construction of temples to house Vedic gods and in the lavish support of Brahmans, but with an intensity not before seen. Rajaraja's remote ancestor Aditya I (A.D. 870-907) is said in the Anbil Plates of Sundara Chola (A.D. 956-73) to have lined the banks of the Kaveri with Siva temples, and modern research confirms that the claim was a substantial one.[327] During the reign of Uttama Chola (A.D. 969-85) and the early part of Rajaraja's reign, quantity may be said to have yielded to quality as the Rajarajesvara temple in Tanjavur commanded most of the King's resources. And, with what remarkable effect! It was moreover during the time of Rajaraja that the rate at which *brahmadeya*s were established attained a peak.

To these means of accentuating the dharmic character of Chola kingship were added two others. One was the sacralization of the royal lineage through the construction of funerary tomb-temples, *paḷḷippadai*, by Parantaka I at Tondaimanad, by Rajaraja at Melpaḍi, and by Rajendra at Ramanathakoyil.[328] The other was the effort by Rajaraja particularly — though by Chola rulers generally — to appropriate for themselves a special relationship to the *mahadeva* Siva as his chief devotees, if not as incarnations.

The Pallavas also introduced the elaborate technical process of which inscriptions were the material result. As in other aspects of dharmic kingship, the Cholas perfected this richly ceremonial and expressive medium. Chola inscriptions do not portray a unified social and political order so much as they constitute an element which fashioned or created that order. If one considers

[326] See the brief discussion by Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Art*, ch. 3, 'Temple-Building in the Pallava Age'.

[327] Discussed by Douglas Barrett, *Early Cola Architecture and Sculpture: 866-1014 A.D.*, Faber & Faber Ltd., 1974, p. 49.

[328] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 453. Balasubrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 18, notes an earlier, he believes earliest, example of such sepulchral tomb-temples constructed by a Ganga chief at Solapuram (Vellore taluk, North Arcot) in A.D. 886.

the 3500 or so published Chola epigraphs,[329] a great variety of discrete and disparate historical features of society can be catalogued. The inscriptional corpus depicts a society from the tenth to the thirteenth century which is very diverse: hundreds of *nadu*s of differing internal structure; hundreds of chiefs, great and small; thousands of gods each of which was the *locus* of cult affiliations and practices; hundreds of terms for local taxes and dues; and other particularistic traits. But, transcending this diversity is a unified conception of a Chola society and a Chola kingdom, and that conception is not the technical, bureaucratic one inferred by most Chola historians. This is a false idiom. It is rather the idiom of a dharmic universe realized through the sacral kingship of the Cholas.

[329] This estimate is given by N. Karashima and Y. Subbarayalu, op. cit.

CHAPTER VIII

Vijayanagara State and Society

Introduction.

The purpose of this final chapter is threefold. One is to examine the political system of the South Indian macro region during the Vijayanagara period as a segmentary state. This further elaboration of the pre-modern, South Indian political system is intended to provide both theoretical and empirical support for the idea of the segmentary state described in detail in the previous chapter. A second purpose is to consider new elements of South Indian society, especially Tamil society, in the centuries after the 'imperial Cholas'. Important among these new elements in the macro region were the expansion of Telugu and Muslim control over a substantial portion of the southern peninsula in the early post-Chola period and the introduction of Europeans from the middle of the period to its end, when the English East India Company established its rule in the late eighteenth century. Thirdly, this chapter intends to provide a cogent background for the consideration of changes in South Indian society during the nineteenth century, a concern which inspired this investigation of early South Indian society by the author many years ago and in which he continues to have a lively research interest.

Treating the several centuries after the Chola period in a single chapter is to condense a rich and varied historical period of South Indian history. This will appear cavalier to many. In justification, several related considerations were determinative. The present monograph is already long by modern publishing standards and to treat the post-Chola period fully, as fully as it may be thought to deserve, would require a volume once again as large as the present one. While it would be absurd to argue that this extended historical period is undeserving of that fullness of attention which is eschewed here, it must also be pointed out that the period cannot be said to have been neglected since the time that Robert Sewell spoke of 'Vijayanagar, A Forgotten Empire!' The work

of Sewell himself, of Krishnaswami Ayyangar, Nilakanta Sastri, Venkataramanayya, Saletore and others have made of Vijayanagara history one of the better researched fields — qualitatively and quantitatively speaking — of any in Indian history. Hence, the urgent need appears less to add yet more pieces of inscriptional and literary evidence to illuminate the period than to propose some perhaps new and different conceptions of that period and its rich evidence with a view to stimulating and perhaps redirecting further research. Such new, and it is hoped stimulating, conceptions as are presented below spring from a variety of sources, including the possibly idiosyncratic interests of the author. However, it is supposed that by viewing the Vijayanagara period against a detailed consideration of the society and culture of the Chola period in the way that has been done here, a potentially useful basis for precisely that kind of revisionistic focus which appears to be called for at this time will be laid.

In quite summary form, the following comparisons and contrasts between the mature Chola and Vijayanagara societies may be outlined. To begin with, there was fundamental continuity between, say, the eleventh and seventeenth centuries with respect to several important aspects of society and culture within the peninsular macro region. The political system continued to be one which is called 'segmentary' or 'pyramidal'. Vijayanagara kingship, like Chola kingship, was 'ritual' in respect to rule over peoples and territories of the macro region beyond the 'home' territories of each kingship. Corresponding to the ritual centre of kingship in both cases — and again outside of the riverine core regions of the two kingships, i.e. the Kaveri of the Cholas and the Tungabhadra of Vijayanagara — locality units of the political system were not merely self-governing — linked to imperial centres neither by resource flows nor command — but were reduced images of the two centres. This remains true even as it is recognized that the conception, size, and complexity of 'locality' may be seen to have changed considerably over the two periods.

Another related element of continuity between the two periods of South Indian history is the central place of religious institutions. More is intended in this observation than that South Indians were and continue to be religious. Religious institutions, particularly the brahmanical institutions of the Chola *brahmadeya*s and the temples of puranic gods later, were core institutions in every sense.

Not only did these institutions directly fulfill the narrowly construed religious needs of the most respectable (*sātvik*) groups in South Indian society, but served as models *for* and models *of* an appropriate order for even ordinary folk by the Vijayanagara period. And, as in the earlier period, religious institutions of the latter period continued to have major economic importance, to be centres of learning, to be focuses of local pride and identity, as well as being theatres of every form of artistic expression.

Finally, and notwithstanding the sturdy independence of locality society and culture, both ages witnessed and reflected the importance of migration and conquest. The peripatetic ways of many in South Indian society are not recognized by most historians. In both periods, however, new peoples were continuously integrated into established locality societies. Most conspicuously this involved military conquerors such as Tamil peasant soldiery under the Cholas in the Karanatak and Andhra extensions of the Tamil plain or Telugu peasant warrior intrusions into Tamil country, especially after A.D. 1450; it also involved the movement of Brahman specialists (e.g. the thousand, learned Apastambhikas from Andhra to the Kaveri basin recorded in the Karandai Plates to Rajendra Chola I) or ritual specialists from one to another temple to install and maintain a particular *bhakti* ritual form. For the movements of persons and groups involved in temple ritual, inscriptions constitute a record of considerable specificity.

Less well-recorded, but nevertheless evident, were movements of lower groups and their progressive inclusion in the expanding agrarian and trade systems of the macro region. The continued process of integration and alliance represented by the dual division of right and left castes often convey an impression of tension and conflict attending the movement of persons and groups in spatial as well as status terms. The appearance of the divisions as conflict groups is exaggerated, however. Conflict was but one of the causes for converting the divisions from potential or latent groupings at any time and place into actual groupings; evidence on the divisions from the colonial city of Madras also contributed to this characterization of the divisions as primarily conflict-ridden, factious groups. During the Vijayanagara period, somewhat less of the factious quality of the divisions is evident.

Given the degree of continuity outlined above, the notion that there might have been significant discontinuity may appear difficult

to sustain. Certainly the historiography on the question of historical discontinuity is mixed and controversial. Scholars whose research has focused on Karnataka and Andhra during the Vijayanagara period (e.g. Saletore and Venkataramanayya) have emphasized continuity and the preservation of ancient usage while those who have worked on Tamil country (e.g. Nilakanta Sastri and Krishnaswami Pillai) have drawn attention to basic changes incident upon the extension of Vijayanagara rule over the Tamil region. But, whatever the historiographical disposition, all could presumably agree that the following changes occured and were important.

The martial character of the Vijayanagara state and the seemingly incessant warfare of the period from the middle of the fourteenth to the late seventeenth century is implicitly contrasted to the apparent civil order of Chola times. Here of course, the threat of Islam to Hindu society is given importance both as explaining the violence of the age and the adaptations of Hindu society to that violence. Indeed, the Islamic threat is given a decidedly modern complexion as the ideological factor which brought the Vijayanagara state into existence and, on the one hand, explained that state's steadfast maintenance of custom, or, on the other hand, for some scholars, justified departures from custom in order to defend Hinduism and *varnāśramadharma*. For scholars who give major attention to this ideological factor, the Vijayanagara state, in its essence, would be considered very different from the Chola state, particularly in its 'feudal' elements.

While not all scholars of Vijayanagara speak of 'feudalism', all give prominence to a feature of political organization which, for those who do use the concept, is decisive. That is, the *nāyaṅkara* system. Whether seen as part of a feudal estate similar in some essential manner to those of medieval Europe or simply as a new political feature of South Indian history, the *nāyaka* of Vijayanagara times is an important and dicontinuous fact of the age. Warriors who used the title of *nāyaka* or *amaranāyaka*, or to whom that title is affixed, cannot be defined easily in terms of particular office, ethnic identity, privileges and duties. Yet, it can be said that during the Vijayanagara period there came into existence, or at least into sharp focus, a level of supralocal chieftainship which appears to be different from anything which existed before. As locally powerful personages, these chiefs may not have been different in any particular from supralocal personages of the past: they were

first and foremost warriors with armed followings; they joined with great kings in defensive and predatory warfare; they drew resources from the territories under their rule and shared little or none of these resources on a regular basis with those of superordinate authority; they distributed, or, more correctly, redistributed the resources they commanded to a variety of religious and social purposes. In these activities, there was perhaps not much new or different. But, in the degree of power of these chieftainships, in the magnitude of local resources commanded and redistributed, in their independence from local social and cultural constraints, their ability to intrude into local society, and in their persistent independence from and occasional opposition to superordinate authority, this political category is unprecedented. These *nayaka* warriors constitute a level of power and authority not before seen in South India.

A second, technological, factor of discontinuity may be seen to explain the *nayankara* system. *Nayaka* power rested upon the substantially increased military capability afforded by firearms, fortifications, and superior cavalry mounts. The ability to command these improved military means was limited to the rich and powerful of whom the Vijayanagara kings were the first. It was upon these new means of warfare that the spectacular military success of the Rayas was based, and their experience with and use of Muslim soldiers from the fifteenth century on made possible much of this superiority. Telugu followers of the Rayas employed the same means to establish themselves as the independent *nayankara*s of the age, and gradually these superior military elements came into the possession of other, non-Telugu, warriors as well. The latter added to the complexity of the supralocal military élite designated by the term *nayankara*.

Dissemination of this assemblage of militarily superior means not only made *nayaka*s the most powerful local and supralocal chiefs South India had known, but almost assured conflict between them and the Raya overlords of the macro region. Such conflict was an early feature of Vijayanagara rule in South India and is ultimately responsible for the decline of the state in the early part of the seventeenth century when civil wars rent the southern peninsula. Conflict between the Vijayanagara kings and the powerful *nayaka*s is another element of discontinuity which is significant. During the late Chola period — the thirteenth century

— similar conflict between kings and powerful chiefs can be seen, but it was neither as enduring nor as much a part of the system of political relationships of that time as it was to be from almost the beginning of the Vijayanagara period. The level of these internal conflicts heralded the end of the Chola overlordship in South India; it was a central part of the Vijayanagara overlordship from its onset in the fourteenth century; and just the fact of having to cope with it, provides a final element of discontinuity with the Chola state. This was the significant political role taken by Brahmans during the Vijayanagara age.

It appears to have been a deliberate policy of the Rayas — certainly it was a policy of Krishnaraya who was perhaps the greatest of all — that Brahmans had been given major political roles. In his time, and to some extent before, Brahmans were the commandants of major fortresses and were considered territorial 'governors' by contemporaries, South Indian as well as foreign. Apart from the maintenance of royal forts in all parts of the macro region, there appears to have been only one governing task for which Brahmans were responsible: that is, checking the fissiparous designs of the *nayakas*. There are few reigns in the dynasties of Vijayanagara in which it is not possible to identify Brahmans as major agents of Raya rule, and the central if not sole requirement for these prestigious persons in their secular, political functions was to defuse the explosive potentialities inherent in the Vijayanagara segmentary state with its powerful, intermediary level of *nayankaras*.

Vijayanagara Political System

There are many important questions about Vijayanagara political and social matters which remain vexingly unclear after more than a half century of scholarly attention.[1] As compared to the Chola period of South Indian history, a greater number of historians have contributed to Vijayanagara studies; there is nothing like the dominance of a single view in the study of this latter period — as that of Nilakanta Sastri for the Chola period. One consequence of this greater variety is a richer historiography, but one which is more difficult to evaluate.

[1] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture* II, Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 1941; first essay published in 1920; R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, London, 1924; Rev. Henry Heras, *The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, Madras, 1927.

Almost from the outset there has been agreement among Vijayanagara students with respect to certain important interpretations. These have tended to remain acceptable to more recent scholars. The first of these durable interpretations pertains to the success of the Vijayanagara state in limiting the expansion of Deccani Muslim power. The fourteenth and fifteenth century Vijayanagara state did stabilize the frontier between the Bahmani sultanate, its successors, and what was to remain a dominantly Hindu social and political order south of the Kistna-Tungabhadra. This leads to what appears to be the second broadly agreed upon view of the Vijayanagara state: that it created the conditions for a defence of Hindu culture and institutions. This defensive role is also seen to have been self-conscious and ideological. Finally, and again a consequence of the encounter with the powerful Muslim states of the Deccan, the Vijayanagara state is seen as an essentially military state, in Nilakanta Sastri's words: 'the nearest approach to a war-state ever made by a Hindu kingdom'.[2]

The social and economic implications of these generally agreed upon views of political history stemming essentially from the Muslim presence in the peninsula have only been partially explored. Among the potentially relevant issues which might be queried are the following. Granted the support which powerful Vijayanagara personages — from the kings of the several Vijayanagara dynasties down to minor, local notables — gave to Hindu religious institutions, what other differences between a general Hindu overlordship and a Muslim one can be demonstrated, or suggested? That is, in terms more general than the support of Hindu temples and Hinduism generally, what difference did it make that this was a 'Hindu' state? More fundamental, perhaps, what was the relationship between the variety of religious institutions and other social, political, and economic institutions of medieval South India? Or again, what were the consequences of the 'warlike' character of the Vijayanagara state within a general institutional and ideological context? To those familiar with studies of the period, these queries will seem to have been answered in the numerous monographs and essays dealing with the Vijayanagara state. And so they have, but usually in terms so general and so simplistically based upon the overwhelming saliency of Islamic power, that

[2] *History of South India*, p. 295.

great reliance cannot be placed upon these answers. This is especially true when note is taken of considerable controversy among scholars on the most important questions.

Some of the questions upon which there remain deep differences among scholars have been noticed in the more recently published research on Vijayanagara. Vasundara Filliozat reminds us of continuing differences among scholars about the origin of the first or Sangama dynasty of Vijayanagara.[3] Older views about the origin of the dynasty as tribal peoples, Kurumba or Kadamba,[4] have given way to two other main theories. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkataramanayya have taken the position that the founders of the Vijayanagara state were Telugus; others, including R. Narasimhachar, B.A. Saletore, H.Heras, and S. Krishnaswami Ayyangar, have identified the founders as Karnataka warriors. A recent study of the second, or Saluva dynasty sees its founders as both, that is, as having originally moved from Karnataka to Andhra country.[5] If Filliozat has decided for himself which of the theories is best supported by the inscriptional evidence he very closely examines in his work, his conclusion is not clear. Yet, the question is of some importance if, as it is usually assumed, the state structure created by this first dynasty was different from other state forms which had existed in South India (if in nothing else, its martial emphasis).

There are, in fact, two major questions about the nature of the Vijayanagara state which may be considered linked to the probable origin of the founding dynasty, but possessing intrinsic importance separate from the question of origins. One of these has been widely discussed as the question of whether 'local institutions' continued to flourish during the Vijayanagara period as they had, especially in Tamil country, prior to that time. And, if they did not, was this a deliberate policy of the new rulers of the Vijayanagara state?

According to Saletore, whose principal work centred upon Karnataka during the Vijayanagara period, the integrity of local institutions, or as he puts it, '*pūrvamariyāde* (ancient constitutional

[3] *L'Epigraphie de Vijayanagar du débout à 1377; Publications de l'école Francais de'Extrème-Orient,* v. 91, Paris, 1973, pp. ix-xv.

[4] Sewell, op. cit., p. 33.

[5] P. Sree Rama Sarma, 'Sāḷuva Dynasty of Vijayanagar', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1972, p. 38.

usage)',[6] continued under the Vijayanagara rulers much as it had before. This is not the view of historians who have sought to see the Vijayanagara state at the height of its territorial influence, that is, including Tamil country. K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, Nilakanta Sastri, and T.V. Mahalingam, and, more recently, A. Krishnaswami, see great changes in the functioning of various local institutions (e.g., *sabhā*, *ūr*, *nāḍu*) in Tamil country. These changes are not, however, attributed to deliberate neglect or subversion by the Vijayanagara rulers, but rather the consequences of new political forms of the military state. This latter view is vigorously presented by Krishnaswami who devotes two chapters to 'feudalism' and 'feudatory relations' in his work on Tamil country during the Vijayanagara period.[7]

The issue of 'feudalism' has arisen with respect to the Vijayanagara state as it has with few other pre-modern states in India. With very few exceptions, 'feudalism' has been used by Indian historians to cope with the specific features of pre-modern, Indian political organization, rather than as a presumed genuine variant of those political forms of Europe or Japan to which the term can legitimately be applied.[8] In connection with the Vijayanagara state, as perhaps with most other Indian states to which the label 'feudal' has been affixed, the primary question goes to the effectiveness of supralocal governmental functions, that is to the Vijayanagara state. As with the Cholas, there is no question of whether there was a state. Rather, the questions are — as with the Cholas — what kind of state, and particularly what kind of governing functions it carried out in contradistinction to those executed at the level of localities, and, moreover, by what means were localities linked to the Vijayanagara state. Feudalism, taken most broadly, appears to answer these questions, and the concept has been considered by many of the scholars who have written on Vijayanagara.

D.C. Sircar, who has condemned the use of the term 'feudalism' for all other medieval states of India, reservedly considers that the

[6] B.A. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire* (A.D. 1346-A.D. 1646), Madras, 1934, v. 1, p. 342.

[7] A. Krishnaswami, *The Tamil Country under Vijayanagar*, Annamalai University, Annamalai, 1964, pp. 100-2.

[8] R.S. Sharma's, *Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200* (University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1965) is the major exception for Sharma here proposes a comprehensive system of 'feudal' relationships.

term may appropriately be applied to the Vijayanagara state because of the central feature of the *amaram* tenure, usually construed as a military service tenure.[9] N. Venkataramanayya, whose work on *amaram* tenure is the most complete, denies the appropriateness of the concept 'feudal' on the basis of the complete absence of any idea of fealty and homage.[10] As utilized by scholars less careful than these two, the concept of 'feudalism' in Vijayanagara history merely obscures the failure to deal satisfactorily with the fragmentary and contradictory evidence and interpretations of Vijayanagara inscriptions with respect to the state.

What is perhaps most striking about the use of a feudal conception in Vijayanagara history is that it appears to stem from the descriptions of European contemporaries of Krishnaraya and Achyutaraya of the sixteenth century. The Portuguese Domingo Paes' and Ferñao Nuniz' reports on the reigns of these two kings of the third dynasty, in A.D. 1520-2 and A.D. 1535-7 respectively, provide the basic information on the *nayaka* system. These Portuguese views have been among the most influential in forming an understanding of Vijayanagara polity precisely because it is as a system that the polity is described. Paes' account is the most important:

> Should any one ask what revenues the king possesses, and what his treasure is that enables him to pay so many troops, since he has so many and such great lords in his kingdom, who, the greater part of them, have themselves revenues, I answer thus: These captains whom he has over these troops of his are the nobles of his kingdom; they are lords, and they hold the city, and the towns and villages of the kingdom; there are captains amongst them who have a revenue of a million and a million and a half of *pardãos*, others a hundred thousand *pardãos*, others two hundred, three hundred or five hundred thousand *pardãos*, and as each one has a revenue so the king fixes for him the number of troops he must maintain, in foot, horse, and elephants. These troops are always ready for duty, whenever they may be called out and wherever they may have to go; and in this way he has this million of fighting men always ready. Each of these captains labours to turn out the best troops he can get because he pays them their salaries; and [in the review of troops by Krishnaraya] . . . there were the finest young men possible to be seen, for in all this array

[9] *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records* (The Dr Radhakumud Mookerji Endowment Lectures of 1964), University of Lucknow, Lucknow, 1969.

[10] N. Venkata Ramanayya, *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, University of Madras, Madras, 1935, pp. 171-2.

> I did not see a man that would act the coward. Besides maintaining these troops, each captain has to make his annual payments to the king, and the king has his own salaried troops to whom he gives pay.[11]

Nuniz supports Paes' description by enumerating some of the great *nayaka*s, their income and military contribution to the king's armies and their contribution to the central treasury. He states: '. . . all the land belongs to the King, and from his hand the captains held it. They make it over to the husbandmen who pay nine-tenths to their Lord; and they have no land of their own, for the Kingdom belongs entirely to the King. . . .'[12]

Vijayanagara historians, especially those who urge the feudal concept, have placed great reliance upon these brief descriptions. Few have evinced much discomfort at the ease with which European forms of political organization could be transferred to medieval South Indian society. *Venkataramanayya*, among the deepest and best scholars of Vijayanagara history, expresses his reservation about applying 'feudal' to the system outlined by Paes and Nuniz. 'The *nāyaṅkara* system', he writes, 'has no doubt strong affinities to feudalism, but it has also many differences.'[13] Among the differences are that the political bonding of European feudal relations based upon fealty and homage were absent as was the practice of 'sub-infeudation'.[14] In fact, Venkataramanayya is content to see the 'system', rather vaguely, as one of military tenure under a central authority: '. . . land was held immediately or mediately of the emperor on condition of military service.'[15] D.C. Sircar, who has taken the strongest opposition to the use of the concept 'feudalism' in India, prefers instead to speak of 'landlordism'

[11] Sewell, op. cit., pp. 280-1. The *pardão* was a gold coin of uncertain value; apparently it was equal to 360 Portuguese *reis* of the sixteenth century and is reckoned by Sewell to have had a value, 'in more recent days' of three-and-a-half-rupees or seven English shillings (op. cit., pp. 270-1 n).

[12] Ibid., p. 379. Unfortunately, neither Portuguese chronicler compares the situation observed in Vijayanagara with what they knew of Portugal, or perhaps more particularly, Portuguese colonies. However, the term *captainia* was a royal grant to 'proprietory landlords' *(donatarios)* who settled portions of Brazil at their own expense in return for which they enjoyed administrative, fiscal, and legal control over colonists (C.R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sa and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola*. University of London, London, 1952, p. 3).

[13] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 171.

[14] Ibid., p. 172.

[15] Ibid.

(which raises at least as many problems as the term it replaces).[16] In his analysis of Vijayanagara inscriptions, Sircar concedes a special element — *amaram* tenure — which contrasts the Vijayanagara state with all other medieval Indian states. But, correctly, he dismisses the arguments of those who speak of an 'Indian feudalism'.

> . . . the landlordism of ancient and medieval India. . . should not be confused with feudalism. In India, the king was never the actual owner of the land under permanent tenants. The majority of the numerous charters, discovered all over India. . . records grants of land without stipulating any obligation of the Brāhmans and temple authorities to the donors. Obviously, the priestly class was the most unsuitable for rendering services of the feudal type. . . . [on the contrary] it is generally stated in clear terms in the grants that the donees were exempted from all obligations including the supply of unpaid labour and sometimes also they were entitled to sell or mortgage the donated property. The object of the grant is generally stated to have been the religious merit and fame of the donor and their parents. There are only a few charters recording grants of land to people of the warrior and other classes, sometimes for services rendered to the king. *But, excluding the amara tenure of late medieval South India*, there is absolutely no mention of obligations having resemblance with those of the feudal type. . .[17]

At another point in his discussion, Sircar attempts to accommodate *amara* tenure to his terminology in the following way:

> . . . the *amara* tenure was similar to the allotment of land to the priest, barber, washerman, carpenter and others for the services to be received from them regularly. . . . The *Amaranāyakas* gave their lands to minor landlords on similar terms of military service just as the subordinate rulers had various grades of vassal chiefs under them.[18]

This formulation, homogenizing as it does the privileges of political and ritual power with the rights of those providing minor, village service, appears to be based upon the conception of inam tenures of British India and leaves unclear, and certainly undemonstrated, the continuities of legal and bureaucratic forms which must be

[16] *Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records*. The Dr Radha Kumud Mookerji Endowment Lectures, University of Lucknow, 1964; University of Lucknow, Lucknow, 1969. Sircar's specific views in this publication are substantially different from his earlier views in a work also cited here, *Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India* (1966).

[17] Ibid., p. 33; emphasis mine

[18] Ibid., p. 32.

shown to have provided the foundations both of medieval and modern arrangements.

Nevertheless, Sircar's position, even with its serious faults, is to be preferred over those of other scholars who, like Sircar, have relied primarily upon inscriptional evidence and still hold to a conception of Vijayanagara feudalism. A. Krishnaswami's recent study, *The Tamil Country under Vijayanagar* is unreserved in its view of the *nayaka* system as feudal.[19]

Krishnaswami makes use of the term 'feudalism' in the titles of several of the sections of his monograph,[20] and he makes statements such as: 'this nāyankara system of the feudal arrangements in the Tamil country seems to have been in existence from the time of the conquest of the region by Kumāra Kampanā.'[21] He also uses phrases such as 'feudal revenue' to refer to various kinds of payments, to refer to many kinds of subordinates and 'feudal vassal'.[22] Though one of the strengths of this work is the careful consideration of extant interpretations on many difficult points, Krishnaswami does not query others' views on feudalism. This is especially peculiar in the case of Venkataramanayya upon whom Krishnaswami relies in many other ways. In fact, there is much carelessness in Krishnaswami's usage, sometimes resulting in distortion of the evidence. This is most tellingly seen in his quotation of the Paes passage cited above. In the second sentence of that much quoted paragraph, Krishnaswami inserts the word 'feudal' which occurs nowhere in the original chronicles. Thus, that sentence in Krishnaswami reads: 'These captains whom the king has over the feudal troops. . . .'[23]

At the base of this question of 'Vijayanagara feudalism' is the fragmentary evidence of the period; it is even more difficult than Chola evidence. Therefore, systemic views or given paradigms of the political system weigh very heavily on how this evidence

[19] Annamalai University Historical Series, no.20, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1964.

[20] Ibid., pp. 161, 176, 179.

[21] Ibid., p. 181.

[22] Ibid., p. 183.

[23] Ibid., p. 177, citing the correct pages in Sewell, that is p. 280. Curiously, Venkataramanayya in *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 170, also misquotes the same sentence for he deletes the words 'of his' after the word 'troops' thereby weakening a point that is consistently pressed by the Portuguese chroniclers, i.e. that all troops were those of the king.

is ultimately evaluated. The great importance of the Portuguese descriptions is precisely in providing a view of a systemic whole to which the disparate inscriptional evidence of the Vijayanagara period can be related. Apart from inscriptions, the other major source of evidence comes from the Mackenzie Collection. Many of the accounts of this eighteenth century collection of local records deal with the migration of Telugu warriors and their followers to those parts of Tamil country which had been peripheral zones of settlement during Chola times. In most accounts, a migrant warrior takes service under a *nayaka* chief, clearing forest to establish a settlement, and prospering with the military fortunes of his *nayaka* patron. Given the construct of feudalism, whether it is taken without qualification as Krishnaswami does or taken as possible variant as Sircar and Venkataramanayya appear to take it, it is not difficult to see these documents confirming 'feudal' arrangements. But, try as one might, it is impossible to find firm evidence for the 'feudal system' in Tamil country as seen by Krishnaswami.[24]

The weight of historiographical judgement about South Indian political history clearly opposes the idea of a Vijayanagara 'feudal system'. Most historians of the period, while they may use terms such as 'feudatory' and 'vassal', do not seriously consider the conception. For them, the new elements which come into the political system from about the fourteenth century — as outlined in the introduction of this chapter — do not alter the basic political organization; they treat the Vijayanagara political system as an elaboration of that system of political relations which had existed in the southern peninsula from at least the tenth century and discussed here as a segmentary polity.

This is most clearly seen in works whose scope extend beyond dynastic periods. T.V. Mahalingam perceives no basic discontinuities during the middle period of South Indian history in his *South Indian Polity*. But, as already noted,[25] Mahalingam, remarkably, treats the entire post-Classical age in South India as a vast, undifferentiated period with evidence of political usages from widely disparate times and places taken as elaborations upon some single structure of power relationships. The more critical work of Appa-

[24] A summary paragraph of 'the feudal arrangements in Tamil country' is found in Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 180-1.

[25] *See*, Stein, 'The State and the Agrarian Order . . . .', p. 68.

dorai on economic history assumes essential continuity though, again as already mentioned, he does not give much attention to formal political arrangements,[26] tending rather to accept Nilakanta Sastri's view of Chola polity and assuming its continuation during the period of Hoysala and Vijayanagara ascendancy in the southern peninsula.

Sastri himself in various works, however, places more emphasis upon the disjunctive character of the Vijayanagara period. This is evident in several ways. First, there is his perception of the martial character of the state in Vijayanagara times and the assumption of a new and dynamic ideological thrust underpinning this martial state. Then there is his assessment that the formerly robust local institutions of Tamil country were decisively weakened. Finally there is his awareness of the more cosmopolitan nature of the Vijayanagara period as seen in the historical sources of the period, including Muslim and European reports as well as greater and more reliable literary sources from within South India.[27] Sastri's sensitivity to these issues sets him apart from other South Indian historians. The latter, in general, whether they study the Vijayanagara period as a whole or of one of the Vijayanagara dynasties, do not give serious consideration to the question of continuity or discontinuity with the Chola state; or, like Mahalingam, in his work on Vijayanagara administration, they take as the prime reference point, ancient, formalistic, and often didactic sastras on government.[28]

Considered as a continuation of the earlier segmentary state, Vijayanagara polity certainly presents changes in the system which existed under the Cholas, but the continuity is impressive. In territorial terms, the scope of the Vijayanagara state during the first dynasty was as great as it had become under Rajaraja Chola I. Thus, it was not only a political system of very substantial dimension, as the Chola state had been, but it encompassed the major population concentrations of Tamil-speakers as well as Kannada-

[26] *Economic Conditions in Southern India, A.D. 1000-1500*, v. 2, ch. 6.

[27] Especially his discussion in *Sources of Indian History with Special Reference to South India*, (Heras Memorial Lectures, 1961), Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1964, chapter 3.

[28] Cf. Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara* and Mahalingam, *Administration and Social Life Under Vijayanagar*, Madras, 1940.

and Telugu-speakers much as the Chola state and the later Madras Presidency did. Also like the Chola state, was the gradual unfolding of the new ritual sovereignty of the Vijayanagara state during the fifteenth century; so was the expansion of the Telugu warrior élite into Tamil country similar to the earlier movement of Tamils into Andhra and Karnataka.

Within thirty years of the establishment of the dynasty upon the foundation of the failing Hoysala house under Ballala III, the early Vijayanagara warriors brilliantly extended their overlordship to the southern part of the peninsula, ending Muslim rule in Madurai in A.D. 1371. The dramatic reconquest of Madurai transformed the Sangama dynasty of Vijayanagara from a powerful, if hazardously based and remote, kingdom into a worthy successor to the Chola. In this sense, the youthful founders of Vijayanagara were able to accomplish what the Hoysalas even under sometimes extraordinary leadership had failed in. And, it is perhaps ironic that one reason for the success of the Sangam warriors was the establishment in A.D. 1347, almost simultaneously with their own beginnings, of the Muslim Bahmani state on their northern frontier. While posing a continuous hazard to the young Vijayanagara state, it also forced the Vijayanagara rulers to establish a lateral defensive system westward and eastward across the peninsula from their principal *locus* of power on the Tungabhadra. Being constrained to such a policy, the Vijayanagara rulers avoided one of the salient weaknesses of their predecessors, the Hoysalas. The latter vacillated between expansion northward into what came to be called the 'Bombay Karnatak' and southward into the Kaveri basin, and they succeeded in neither. It may also be added that the expansion of the first of the Vijayanagara rulers laterally across the peninsula was made necessary by the success of the first rulers of the Bahmani sultanate in establishing close collaboration with Hindu warriors of Andhra country, notably the Kapaya Nayaka of Warangal.[29]

The expansion of Vijayanagara sovereignty to Tulu country in the west and Penukonda in the east reflects this pressure from the north and created a war frontier between the states in the *doab* tract of Raichur. Denied expansion to the north, the Vijayanagara rulers were forced into what was to become the second element of strength and durability of their state, that is the expansion into Tamil country.

[29] Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 231.

The movement of the Vijayanagara overlordship southward came in slow stages, being punctuated by a series of wars with the Bahmanis from the 1350s to the 1470s.[30] In some cases at least, the victims of Vijayanagara expansion southward were Hindu chiefs. Thus, the defeat of the Sambuvaraya chiefs of Rajagambirarajyam by Kumara Kampana, the son of the Vijayanagara king Bukka I, around A.D. 1363, was as impressive a victory as his conquest of the Madurai Sultanate a few years later. Rajagambirarajyam included a substantial part of Tondaimandalam just as the Sultanate included a substantial part of Pandimandalam.[31] But, such conquests were an exceptional manifestation of the expanding Vijayanagara overlordship. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries what more characteristically 'expanded' was a successful claim of overlordship, not direct Vijayanagara control. Great chiefs, like the Zamorin of Calicut,[32] and small chiefs, like the *nattar* of Ponpattai (in Cholamandalam),[33] recognized the overlordship of Vijayanagara in more appropriate ways: the former by responding promptly to a command from Devaraya II for the presence at the royal court of the Persian ambassador Abdur Razzak (who recorded the event) and the latter by the acknowledgement of the right of the Vijayanagara prince Kumara Kampana to present a gift to a temple in his territory.

During the expansion of the Vijayanagara overlordship from the earliest rulers of the first dynasty through the relatively short-lived second, or Saluva, dynasty (A.D. 1486-1505), the importance of dharmic ideology for Vijayanagara rule is revealed: the mission of the State in preserving Hindu institutions against the depredations of Muslims of the Deccan. Venkataramanayya states: 'the history of Vijayanagara may be said to be the history of a fierce struggle between the Hindus of the Deccan and the Muhammadan rulers of the Deccan',[34] Nilakanta Sastri similarly states:

> . . . the basic nature of the historic role of Vijayanagar . . . was to preserve South India as the last refuge of the traditional culture of and institutions of the country,[35] . . . that great empire which, by resisting the onslaughts

[30] Ibid., pp. 232-45.

[31] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 6-21. The territory included portions of modern Chingleput and North and South Arcot districts. On other such conquests, ibid., pp. 18-21, 34, and 215-19; also Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, pp. 264-77.

[32] Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 260.

[33] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 93-4.

[34] *Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, p. 145.

[35] *History of South India*, p. 305.

> of Islam, championed the case of Hindu civilization and culture in the South for close to three centuries and thus preserved the ancient tradition of the country in its polity, its learning and its arts.[36]

There can be no question that the existence of the highly militarized power of the Vijayanagara state south of the Kistna-Godavari had the effect of stemming Muslim expansion. However, the dharmic posture of the Vijayanagara rulers as protectors of Hindu culture is, above all, ideologically significant. Vijayanagara kingship and the Vijayanagara state were constituted upon, or soon came to acquire, an ideological principle which distinguishes it from previous South Indian states. It is this principle which most decisively identifies the Vijayanagara overlordship, not presumed differences in the basic structure of the State.

Vijayanagara kingship, like all medieval Hindu kingships, expressed appropriateness in terms of the maintenance of dharma, and especially *varnāśramadharma*. This is captured in Vijayanagara inscriptional *prasatis* in a very different way from Chola inscriptions even though the dharmic qualities of their kings were the same. Both kingships claimed to be in the hands of conquerors whose military exploits made them *digvijayans*; these kings were the greatest of prestators whose gifts to gods and Brahmans assured the welfare of the world.

Among the things that distinguish the Vijayanagara from the Chola overlordship is the personal character of the former or their agents as dharmic actors. Vijayanagara inscriptions of the fourteenth century onwards depict the Vijayanagara king, his son, or preceptorial agent making gifts to temples or to Brahmans, adjudicating disputes among such personages, or re-establishing temple worship long interrupted by Muslim depredations or other disorders. There is in the Vijayanagara records an immediacy of the royal presence that is largely absent from most Chola inscriptions. In the latter, royal dharma and prestations are realized through the often impersonal and remote mediation of an unnamed *ajnāpati*, or 'executor'[37] It is this remoteness and indirection of the expression of Chola *rājdharma* — the elaborate set of documents and orders that connect a gift to Brahmans or gods with the Chola kings — that gave to earlier kingship its bureaucratic,

[36] Ibid., p. 264.

[37] I am indebted to discussions with Arjun Appadurai and Nicholas Dirks for clarification of this point. Also *see*, Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 143, 374.

even 'Byzantine', tone. Vijayanagara inscriptions, by contrast, place the king, his kinsmen or guru in the arena of prestation in a very direct way.

In nothing else is the ritual focus of the Vijayanagara kings so clear as in the *mahānavamī* festival, an annual royal ceremony of the fifteenth and sixteenth century occuring about 15 September to 15 October. Since Vijayanagara times, the nine day festival, followed by a tenth and final day — *dasara* — has been important in many parts of the macro region. Most famous in Karnataka, as Dasara, it has been continuously celebrated at least since Raja Wodeyar sponsored it in late September, A.D. 1610 at Seringapatam.[38] The same festival, also called *nava rātri*, is celebrated by the *nayaka* successors of Vijayanagara. The Mahanavami is described in vivid detail by the Portuguese sojourners of the sixteenth century, Paes and Nuniz, and also mentioned by the Italian Nicolo Conti whose report of a visit to Vijayanagara about A.D. 1420 is the earliest extant and by Abdur Razzak, the Persian ambassador ordered to Vijayanagara by the king Deva Raya II around 1442.[39] The theoretical works of Hocart and Gonda[40] prepare the way for the acceptance of the ritual actions of ancient Indian kings, but it is scarcely possible to find a better medieval example than the nine days of the Mahanavami dedicated to protection and regeneration at the capital city of Vijayanagara.

Puranic sources speak of two important nine day festivals which mark the turning of the three seasons of the sub-continent: in March-April, after the harvest of the *sambā* or *rabi* crop and the

[38] C. Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore, 1399-1799 A.D.*, Government Press, Bangalore, 1943, v. 2, p. 68 and *Historical Sketches of the South of India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysoor . . . to 1799 . . . . by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Wilks, Political Resident at the Court of Mysore*, ed. Murray Hammick, Government Branch Press, Mysore, 1930, v. 1, pp. 61-3. The *Mahānavami* begins on the ninth day of the increasing moon of the seventh lunar month, *āśvina* (Tamil month, *puraṭṭāci*). See the *forthcoming* essay (Princeton University Press), on this festival by the present author in a volume of studies on the Gupta age edited by Bardwell L. Smith, 1979.

[39] Sewell, *Forgotten Empire*, Paes' chronicle, pp. 253-64 and Nuniz' chronicle, pp. 357-60. Conti's and Razzak's accounts are found in R.H. Major, *India in the Fifteenth Century; a Collection of Narratives of Voyages to India*, Hakluyt Society, London, no.22, 1857.

[40] A.M. Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970 (originally published in Cairo, 1936) and J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1966.

onset of the hot season, and in September-October, after the harvest of the *kār* or *kharif* crop and the onset of the cold season. The first of these is associated with the god Rāma and the second with the goddess Devi, or Durgā. Elements of both these festivals, as described in puranic works, can be seen to exist in the Mahanavami of medieval Vijayanagara, and the Rama motif may have been as important as the Devi motif though it is the later (i.e. September-October) nine days that was celebrated at Vijayanagara.

The most elaborate description of the festival was that of Paes, from whose account the following features may be stressed. Throughout the nine days, festivities are centred in the 'citadel' area of Vijayanagara, before the palace and on two, large, permanent structures: one of which is called 'The House of Victory' by Paes ('Throne Platform' by Longhurst, the archaeologist of Vijayanagara. and the *mahānavamī dibba* according to the modern residents of Hampi) and the other 'The King's Audience Hall'. The ruins of both are massive granite slab platforms showing structural signs of having borne large wooden superstructures as described in the medieval chronicles. These were constructed by Krishnadevaraya around A.D. 1513 following his Orissan campaign and victory over the Gajapatis.

Around and within these buildings were enacted the events of the festival.[41] Here the king observed the many processions, displays, and games and here he accepted the homage and the gifts of throngs of notables as he sat upon his bejewelled throne. The king sometimes shared this throne, or sat at its foot, while it was occupied by a richly decorated processional *murti* of a god; at other times he was alone. The god is not identified. Within the 'House of Victory' was a special, enclosed, and, again, richly decorated chamber in which the image was sheltered when it was not on display before the public participants in the festival. At several points in the proceedings, the King, sometimes with Brahmans and sometimes alone, retired to this enclosed chamber of the deity for worship. Both the Audience Hall and the Throne Platform bear bas-relief sculpture along their granite sides depicting many of the events described by Paes and Nuniz.

In front of the two structures which were the centre of the festival activities were constructed a number of pavilions which contributed

41 A.H. Longhurst, *Hampi Ruins Described and Illustrated,* Government Press, Madras, 1917, pp. 57-70.

to the aura of wealth and sumptuousness of the festival as a whole. They were elaborately decorated, in among other ways, with 'devices', apparently heraldic symbols, of the grandeé occupants for whom the pavilions were temporary housing during the festival. Nuniz reported that there were nine major pavilions (he called them 'castles') for the most illustrious of the notables and that each military commander also had to erect one in the broad space before the palace.[42] Razzak, as ambassador from Persia, was ensconced in one of these.[43]

Access to the guarded, central arena of festival activity was gained by passage through several gates enclosing wells of the temple precincts; Paes' description of this suggests passage through a series of gateways as the medieval pilgrim moved toward the sanctorum in the great temples of South India.[44] Once gained, the spacious open area before the palace, the Audience Hall, and the house of Victory was ringed about with the pavilions referred to and with shaded seating from which the great — soldiers, sectarian leaders and others — viewed the proceedings immediately before the House of Victory on whose higher levels the King sat.

What was viewed was a combination of a great durbar with its offerings of homage and wealth to the King and the return gifts from the King — exchanges of honours; the sacrificial reconsecration of the King's arms — his soldiers, horses, elephants — in which hundreds or thousands of animals were slaughtered; *darshana* and *puja* of the King's tutelary — the goddess — as well as his closest agnatic and affinal kinsmen; and a variety of athletic contests, dancing and singing processions involving the King's caparisoned women and temple dancers from throughout the realm, and fireworks displays. The focus of these diverse and magnificent entertainments was always the King as glorious and conquering warrior, as the possessor of vast riches lavishly displayed by him and his women (queens and their maids of honour) and distributed to his followers. The King was fructifier and agent of prosperity of the world. Most succinctly assessed, the Mahanavami appears as a combination of the *aśvamedha* (the greatest of all royal sacrifices, with its celebration and consecration of

[42] Sewell, *Forgotten Empire*, p. 357.

[43] Major, op. cit., 'Narrative of the Voyage of Abd-er Razzak, Ambassador from Shah Rukh, A.H. 845, A.D. 1442', p. 36.

[44] Sewell, op. cit., pp. 253-4.

kingly military prowess as symbolized in the horse of the king) and the description of Rama's return to Ayodhya in Canto 130 of the final book of Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Comparing the Mahanavami of Vijayanagara with the archaic horse sacrifice may seem superficial or strained, for the Vijayanagara period knows of no such royal sacrifices; none are even alluded to as during the Chola period. Certain common features of the archaic *aśvamedha* and the medieval Mahanavami may indeed be superficial. Both are ten day rituals and at least one of the great *aśvamedha*s was celebrated on a *mahānavamī* (the March-April or Chaitra one) by Yudhisthira, hero of the *Mahabharata*.[45] Yet, the anointing of royal arms by priests [46] and by royal women along with animal sacrifices are prominent features of the Vijayanagara festival; these elements figure conspicuously in the two most detailed accounts of it. Paes wrote of the King's women:

> They come in regular order one before the other, in all perhaps sixty women fair and strong, from sixteen to twenty years of age. Who is he that could tell of the costliness and value of what each of these women carried on her person? So great is the weight of the bracelets and jewels carried by them that many of them cannot support them, and women accompanying them assisting them by supporting their arms. In this manner and in this array they proceed three times around the [King's] horses, and at the end retire into the palace.[47]

Compare this with the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

> It is the wives that anoint (the horse), for they — to wit (many) wives — are a form of prosperity. . . .[48] the wives walk round (the horse) . . . thrice they walk round. . . .[49]

An even more strikingly parallel feature of the Mahanavami is the symbolic significance of the King's horse in the consecration of his kingship. Paes describes a troop of richly caparisoned horses

[45] *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa*, trans. by P.C. Roy, Oriental Publishing Co., Calcutta n.d., v. 12, 'Aswamedha Parva', sec. 84, p. 161 and *passim*.

[46] Priests offer prayers for and sprinkle water upon the King's horses and elephants: Nuniz in Sewell, op. cit., p. 358.

[47] Sewell, op. cit., p. 263.

[48] J. Eggeling (Trans.), *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa According to the Text of the Madhyandina School* in *Sacred Books of the East*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1900, v. 44, pt 5, p. 313. On the sprinkling anointment of the sacrificial horse, see pp. 278-9.

[49] Ibid., pp. 322-3.

brought before the King at one point in the Mahanavami, and leading this troop was one bearing 'two state umbrellas of the king and grander decorations than the others'.[50] Of this one, Paes writes:

> You must know that this horse that is conducted with all this state is a horse that the king keeps, on which they are sworn and received as kings, and on it must be sworn all those that shall come after them; and in case such a horse dies they put another in its place.[51]

This suggested comparison with the archaic, Vedic *aśvamedha* is more than anachronistic; it is also flawed in being an apparent violation of Vedic prohibitions as well. The bright half of the lunar month of *āṣvina* (Tamil month of *puraṭṭāci*) when the Mahanavami festival occurs is said to be inauspicious for Vedic learning and by extension for other Vedic activities as well. These activities are enjoined as *anadhyāya* according to the *dharamaśāstra* of Aparaka.[52] Brahmans do figure in the Mahanavami festival as ritual performers along with the King in relation to the King's tutelary; they also are recipients of royal gifts. But, Brahmans do not dominate the ritual arena, which is very much the King's and in one description of the festival, that of Conti around A.D. 1420, Brahmans appear to have been publicly reviled.[53]

The association of Sri Rama with the Mahanavami is somewhat more direct. The same mood of celebration by a people of their king found in the final verses of the Valmiki *Ramayana* suffuses the vivid descriptions of the festival of Vijayanagara. And, there is the further shared conception of regal deliverance from threatening evil. Saletore captures this quality in his statement on the festival.

> Religious in atmosphere, it is essentially political in its significance. For it commemorates the anniversary of Rama's marching against Rāvana, and in its twofold aspect of the worship of Durga and of the *āyudhas* or arms, culminating in the Vijaya-dasami [victorious tenth day], was particularly suited to Vijayanagara times when fatal issues loomed ominously in the political horizon.[54]

[50] Sewell, op. cit., p. 262.

[51] Loc. cit..

[52] Kane, *History of Dharamśāstra*, v. 2, pt 1, p. 395.

[53] 'The Travels of Nicolo Conti in the East in the Early Part of the Fifteenth Century', in Major, op. cit., p. 28 and Sewell, op. cit., p. 83.

[54] Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagara Empire*, v. 2, p. 372.

The god Rama appears important in yet another way. One of the major temples of the capital city under the Tuluva dynasty of Vijayanagara, and especially in Krishnadevaraya's time was that dedicated to Ramachandra, the hero of the *Ramayana* and the seventh avatar of Vishnu. A separate shrine within that temple was dedicated to the Devi consort of Rama. This temple was also called the Hazara Rama temple, and it was the only shrine within the palace precincts and thus quite proximate to the varied activities of the festival. The unidentified image in the accounts of the Mahanavami may have been the consort goddess of Sri Rama if the proximity of the Rama temple is taken as important and if the judgement of Longhurst, the archaeologist of Hampi, or Vijayanagara, is correct that the Rama shrine was the private place of worship of the Tuluva kings.[55]

Though all historians of Vijayanagara have mentioned the Mahanavami festival, often quoting long excerpts from the accounts of Paes and Nuniz, the festival has not received analysis as a single, unified ritual event. Culled from the detailed reports have been odd facts (e.g. 'the rents' of the *nayakas* are paid at this time and the King 'owns' all the land) and descriptions of the King, his high officials, and queens. However, this festival, like others, is perceived as a unified system of action and meaning, and should be interpreted in that light.

Two aspects of the *mahānavamī tīrtha* immediately seize attention: its overwhelmingly royal character and its symbolically incorporative character. These aspects confirm conceptions of

[55] Longhurst, op. cit., p. 71. There is some uncertainty about the personal religious preferences of Krishnadevaraya. He appears to have been a Vaishnava *bhakta* as were others of his dynasty, the preceding Saluva and succeeding Aravidu dynasties, and there is his special relationship with the great Madhva scholar Vyasatirtha. The latter was the King's guru as well as the head of a school in Vijayanagara which had been supported by the Saluvas as well. (*See* M. Rama Rao, *Krishnadeva Raya,* National Book Trust, New Delhi, National Biography Series, 1971, pp. 39-40). This relationship may have been more personal than sectarian, and might not, therefore, presume a preference by the King for the god Krishna, the deity of the Madhva sect, over the god Rama. It is interesting to note that the large Krishna temple in Vijayanagara was built by Krishnadevaraya about the same time as the Rama temple and the Throne Platform ('House of Victory'). This Krishna temple is about 1.5 miles from the palace area, and according to Longhurst (op. cit., p. 96), sheltered an image taken from the Gajapati fortress of Udayagiri around A.D. 1513. This Krishna image is thus more a trophy of the King than his tutelary.

ritual kingship assumed in the concept of the segmentary state suggested some forty years ago by Hocart and since then largely ignored by Indological scholars.[56] Hocart's conception of the king as ritual performer and the primary agency for the prosperity and welfare of the realm, and his attention to the symbolically integrative character of the temple and the city are extraordinarily well-realized in the Mahanavami festival. Kingly ritual power is expressed in numerous ways: in the manifestation of wealth displayed and elaborately redistributed at many points of the nine day festival; in the various consecratory actions involving the King's arms as the means of his royal fame and protection; and also in the King's frequent and often solitary worship of (and ultimately identity with) the deity who presides with him over the festival, and in whose name and for whose propitiation the festival occurs. Certain signs of the Devi (Durga) worship are clear in this festival, and they deserve notice. According to the *Devi Bhagavatam Purana*, females in procession before the goddess form an essential element of the Nava-ratri or Mahanavami festival.[57] It is also well to recall that since the Mahanavami is considered a time of danger, the protective power of the Devi and also the King are enhanced.

Incorporative elements to which Hocart drew attention in his work included the subordination of all gods and all chiefs to the king. This incorporation is signified by various means in the Mahanavami festival. The palace site of the festival is reached through two large gates over which towers are constructed.[58] These massive gateways were apparently destroyed by the Muslim invaders of the city in the sixteenth century; gates in other parts of the Hampi ruins, at some distance from the 'citadel' of Krishnadevaraya's time,[59] confirm Paes' description of these structures which resemble the *gopuram* leading to the sanctorums of Hindu temples of the time. King and god are at least homologized, if they are not

[56] Hocart, *Kings and Councillors*. He is not mentioned by Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*. Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*, is a recent exception to the general neglect of Hocart.

[57] *See* B. Ramakrishna Rao, 'The Dasara Celebrations in Mysore', *QJMS*, v. 11 (July, 1921), pp. 302-3 and *The Sri Mad Devi Bhagavatam* in *Sacred Books of the Hindus*, v. 26. Trans. Swami Vijnanananda (H.P. Chatterji), Panani Office, Allahabad, 'On Navarātra', pt 1, ch. 26, pp. 225-9.

[58] Sewell, op. cit., pp. 253-4.

[59] Several are shown in Longhurst, op. cit., pp. 47-9.

equated. The pavilions erected in the spacious, interior courtyard before the Throne Platform to house the notables of the realm are called 'castles', or dwellings of great men placed within the precincts of the palace and thus under the protection of the great king.

Gods of the King's realm are also incorporated in his city. Included here are permanent resident deities like the Gajapati Krishna of Udayagiri and Vitthala (Vithoba) from distant Maharashtra.[60] It also appears that deities from elsewhere in the realm are brought to the capital during the festival and presented to the King for his adoration.[61] And, servants of gods throughout the King's realm come to do obeisance. This included priests, but most conspicuously it was the temple women (whom the Portuguese called 'courtesans') of shrines everywhere. These temple dancers and musicians performed before the King just as they did before the god to whom they were dedicated.[62]

Following Hocart's perceptive discussion, it is possible to point to the crucial place of the city — this city of victory — in the total moral order over which the Vijayanagara kings exercised sway. The city, Hocart wrote, 'never stands for anything specific; it is never less than the whole world, and its parts are the parts of the world. . . .'[63] And, persistently linked to the city and its establishment is the goddess Durga. As Bhuvanesvari, 'mistress of the world',[64] the goddess was by tradition[65] propitiated by Vidyaranya, or Madhvacharya, who is supposed to have been the preceptor of the founders of the city in A.D. 1336. This connection of the great goddess and the city of the Rayas was first presented by William Taylor in his 1835 translation of several Tamil chronicles

[60] Krishnadevaraya built a temple for Vitthala which is considered one of the most beautiful in South India. However, this god was worshipped in Vijayanagara before that time (*Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, v. 3, p. 47 and n.).

[61] Sewell, op. cit., p. 264.

[62] Ibid., p. 253 and Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, pp. 404-5. This is another parallel with the *aśvamedha* sacrifice over whose ten days of the consecration of the horse, different gods are presented: *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, pt 5, pp. xxxi, 361-70.

[63] Hocart, op. cit., p. 250.

[64] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 760.

[65] The association of Madhvacharya with the Sangama founders of Vijayanagara in A.D. 1336 has been a contentious one; according to the official biography of the *saṁpradāya*, Madhva died in A.D. 1317 (B.N.K. Sharma, *Śrī Madhva's Teachings in His Own Words*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970, pp. 4-9).

of later medieval times,[66] and though the idea continues to be accepted by most Vijayanagara scholars, none have exploited fully the symbolic power of the relationships of goddess propitiation, the Rayas and the city. While scholars have failed in this, the successor states of the Vijayanagara in South India, notably the Wodeyars of Mysore and the Nayaka kings of Madurai did not; they maintained this royal festival in their capitals in full richness.[67]

The imitation by successors of the Rayas in South India (and possibly also the Maratha king Sivaji) of the ruler as an active ritual 'principal' (to use Hocart's term) was the result, in part at least, of the perceived threat to Hindu institutions from Muslim powers of peninsular India. Just as the expansion of the Bahmani sultanate and its successors in the Deccan acquired a special saliency in the ideological presentation of the Vijayanagara state as symbols of danger to the dharma which Hindu kings were bound to protect and nourish, Muslims of a later day continued to have a special meaning, however dubious their actual threat may have been.

Actually, those who bore the brunt of Vijayanagara military power were most often Hindu rulers, not Muslims. And, ironically perhaps, the most strategically placed military units of the Vijayanagara military formations were composed of Muslims, as is generally conceded.[68] This factor is often elicited to explain the ultimate defeat of Vijayanagara arms in the sixteenth century;[69] it nevertheless remains clear that Muslim contingents were responsible for at least part of the great early successes of the Vijayanagara rulers against Hindu houses which they toppled. The Vijayanagara state was however not in fact dedicated to different principles of rule as might be supposed from the confrontation of Hindu and Muslim forces in the Deccan, whatever the importance of its dharmic ideology. To suppose otherwise is to transfer to

[66] *Oriental Historical Manuscripts, in the Tamil Language: Translated with Annotations*, by William Taylor, 2v., C.J. Taylor, Madras, 1835, v. 2, pp. 102-3.

[67] Noted by Taylor, op. cit., p. 103; Abbé Dubois, op. cit., pp. 569-71; Rice, *Mysore: A Gazetteer*, v. 1, p. 378 and a description of its celebration at Seringapatam in September 1783, according to the report of a captured English soldier.

[68] Based upon evidence such as the A.D. 1430 inscription of the time of Devaraya referring to 10,000 *turushka* (Muslim) horsemen in his service (*E.C.*, v. 3, 'Introduction', p. 23).

[69] The battle which fatally weakened the Vijayanagara kingdom at Rakshasi-Tangdi (Talikota) is supposed to have been decided by the desertion of two Muslim commanders of Rama Raya's army (Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 238).

an earlier time the communal politics of the twentieth century. It was essentially a continuation of the segmentary state of the Cholas in terms of its basic political character.

And, like the rule of the Cholas, Vijayanagara power was often quite remote after an initial intrusion of its forces into territories ruled by Hindu chiefs. Many parts of the deep southern peninsula continued to be ruled by members of the same families whom the Vijayanagara armies had conquered. This is particularly true of the Pandyan territory through most of the fifteenth century. In most other parts of Tamil country, the ancient territorial terminology remained, and Telugu Nayakas and Brahmans placed in positions of supralocal agents for Vijayanagara authority. Hence, to overstate the ideological element and to speak of a newly constituted basis of state power and legitimacy in the Vijayanagara period would be to distort the historical evidence which we possess of the period. Pre-Vijayanagara forms proved by and large to be both adequate and durable.

Another feature of Vijayanagara rule which also invites comparison with the impressive Chola kingship was the diversity of the peoples under each. In a technical sense, it is the rule over many and different peoples which has justified the use of 'empire' or 'imperial' in connection with the Chola and Vijayanagara states. For the Tamil Cholas based in the rich Kaveri basin, the earliest regions to be included in their expanding sovereignty were the two secondary central zones of the Tamil plain: Pandimandalam and Tondaimandalam. But soon after, Chola sovereignty was established over places of dominantly non-Tamil population with ancient cultural traditions of their own.[70] Chola influence was extended northward to Vengi and north-westward to Gaṅgavāḍi well before it was fully established in the Tamil peripheral zone of Koṅgu (modern Coimbatore and Salem).

Similarly, the first Vijayanagara dynasty, shortly after the establishment of their sovereignty over the northern portion of what was to become the empire, moved to establish themselves in Tamil country. The process was repeated in the second dynasty

[70] According to one of the earliest extant works on Kannada rhetoric, the *Kavirajamarga* of Nripatunga, *c.* A.D. 850, the area in which Kannada was spoken extended from the upper Kaveri to the Godavari (Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, pp. 375-6). Telugu inscriptions date from fifth century and Kannada inscriptions from the sixth (ibid., p. 387 and Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 48-9).

as well. Whether the Vijayanagara rulers are to be regarded as essentially Kannadigas or Telugus, or whether they are to be regarded as both from the very beginning — a position taken recently by P. Sree Rama Sarma —[71] the territorial scope of their power included the entire southern peninsula.

Thus both kingships were firmly based in one part of the southern peninsula from which they drew the major resources for sustaining their military supremacy, namely their soldiery; but both also achieved overlordship in other, well-populated and wealthy parts of the macro region. Overlordship in these latter places appears to have resulted from three different kinds of processes. One was the result of adventurous pillaging expeditions of small groups of Telugu warriors or by large 'invasions', as Krishnaswami has labelled them, of Vijayanagara forces under royal commanders. The second process was the transformation of local chiefs into *nayaka*s, thus constituting the cement of the new overlordship and at the same time, the means of strengthening the control of local chiefs. The result of these two processes in both the Chola and Vijayanagara cases were similar. The third means of extending the Vijayanagara overlordship over the southern peninsula is different from anything seen in Chola times; this was the incorporation of the support and the followings of sectarian groupings in all parts of the southern peninsula. With respect to this, of course, the dharmic ideology of the Rayas was all-important.

Raids and invasions into territories remote from their prime bases led to permanent settlement in both cases. In the Chola period this occurred when parts of the modern district of Kolar, in Karnataka, were brought under the control of Tamils of Tondaimandalam as seen in the famous Mulbagal inscription of A.D. 1072 discussed above. A variation on this expansion process in the Vijayanagara period is seen during the fifteenth century. Then, Telugu warriors, without frontally challenging the Tamil chiefs of many areas of older settlement, established themselves in more remote parts of the Tamil plain abutting on the plain at the foothills of the Eastern Ghats. The results of this latter form of expansion are recorded in modern census volumes showing a zone of Telugu speakers running from north to south and splitting some of the modern Tamil Nadu districts into a dominantly Tamil-speaking

[71] As noticed above, this question of origins has most recently raised again by Filliozat; the discussion by Sree Rama Sarma: op. cit., p. 37.

eastern side and Telugu-speaking western side.[72] In these sparsely populated interstices, Telugu migrants of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries not only found scope for political control, but they found black soils with which they were familiar and for which they possessed the means of exploiting in ways superior to the older Tamil residents of these areas.[73] It was the relatively high proportion of Telugu warriors and settlers in these peripheral parts of the Tamil plain that explains the placement of the two subordinate 'capitals' of Vijayanagara in Tondaimandalam: Padividu and Tiruvadi. The striking pattern of this Telugu expansion was noted by early British administrators as well as by epigraphists.[74] But the unique record of this process is contained in the accounts of the records collected by Colin MacKenzie in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Telugu-speaking Reddis displaced Tamil-speaking local leaders as dominant cultivating groups, and this displacement brought with it changes in the language of temple inscriptions from Tamil to Telugu, as at the great Vaishnava temple of Tirupati.[75] This movement of Telugu warriors into Tamil country was itself part of a larger pattern of movements. During the late fifteenth century, Reddis were seen to be moving into the western parts of Andhra from their home territories to the east as recorded in a Kurnool inscription of Saluva Narasimha's time.[76] And it may be speculated that this migration of small groups of Telugu warriors was not solely the result of the attractions of new areas of pillage and settlement, but pressure during the preceding century from Orissan warriors, like themselves, who were pressing southward into the Vengi region. An inscription of A.D. 1396-7, from Palnad taluk in western Guntur district records a conflict between Oriya speaking Vaishnavas and Telugus in which the former, called *badugulavaru* (much as in Tamil country Telugus were referred to *vaḍugans* or northern people), were

[72] K. Srinavasaraghavan, 'A Geographical Study of the Vellore Basin', *Indian Geographical Journal*, Madras, v. 11, no.3 (October, 1936), p. 230. Based upon observations in the 1901 Census, India Census Commissioner, *Census of India*, 1901, *Report*, p. 289.

[73] Madras, The Central Agricultural Committee, 'Some Suggestions for Madras Ryots By Special Correspondent of the "Madras Mail"', *Bulletin No.3*, Madras, 1906, p. 2; India Office Library, P/V 2148.

[74] *See* the observation of the epigraphist Venkayya in *A.R.E.*, 1904, para. 14.

[75] *A.R.E.*, 1904, para. 14.

[76] *A.R.E.*, 1960-1, copperplate number 4 of 1960-1.

accorded full participation in the Vaishnava sectarian activity of *pallināḍu*.[77]

Whether by the movement of small groups of Telugu warriors or by invasions of Telugu armies, these fourteenth and fifteenth century conquests did not result in an easy or firm control over Tamil country by the Vijayanagara overlordship. Tamil country had virtually to be reconquered in the late fifteenth century by Saluva Narasimha and his son, Narasa Nayaka, to seize back the formerly conquered territories in Tondaimandalam as well as Chola and Pandya countries from local chiefs.[78] Invasions of these territories subsequently by the Orissan king Kapilesvara Gajapati and his son, Kumara Hamvira in A.D. 1463-4 did nothing to strengthen the Vijayanagara hold on Tamil country.[79] Later, the great Krishnaraya had apparently[80] to send another Telugu army into Tamil country to refurbish, yet again, the Vijayanagara overlordship. This resulted in what Krishnaswami claims to have been a 'momentous change', namely the replacement of a system of governors (*mahāmaṇḍalēśvara*s) by four military commanders, *nayaka*s, presumably to act under the king's orders with the assistance of dependent warriors called *pāḷaiyagār*s.[81] The residue — and perhaps the only result — of these successive invasions of Vijayanagara warriors into Tamil country was the creation of a stratum of super chiefs who were either Telugus themselves or Tamils allied to Telugus. It is these personages who constituted the segmentary leadership in Tamil country during the Vijayanagara period.

Looked upon as segmentary states, one of the most crucial differences between the Chola and Vijayanagara states is the so-called '*nayaka* system'. The notion of a '*nayaka* system' can scarcely be considered indigenous; it is a conception derived from the first 'outsiders' whose attempts to understand the Vijayanagara polity we have, the sixteenth century Portuguese Nuniz and Paes. As already observed, there is little either in the Vijayanagara

[77] *A.R.E.*, 1910, para. 49 regarding 556 of 1909.

[78] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 106-15.

[79] Ibid., p. 112.

[80] 'Apparently' because the sole source of this 'invasion' is a document from the Mackenzie Collection, the 'Karnataka Rajakkal Savistara Charitam' cited, ibid., pp. 193-4.

[81] Ibid., pp. 193-5.

inscriptions or literary evidence to support the ordered political relationships described by these chroniclers. Thus, the *nayaka* system as a *system*, may be as alien to the facts of Vijayanagara political relations as the conception of feudalism which derives in considerable part from notions of a *nayaka* system. Those military personages referred to in many Vijayanagara inscriptions by the title '*nayaka*' are extremely important, however, for they came to comprise the major connecting elements in the Vijayanagara segmentary state. The emergence of the new stratum of supralocal warriors became a possibility with the raids and, later, the invasions of Telugus into various parts of the macro region from the middle of the fourteenth century; the stratum became a reality when these powerful outsiders forged links to the diverse locality populations they ruled while retaining certain ties to the Telugu Rayas in Vijayanagara on the Tungabhadra.

*Nayaka*s of the Vijayanagara period are seen by most scholars as warriors possessing an office conferred by the central Vijayanagara government. The term, *amaranāyaṅkara*, signifies an office (*-kara*) possessed by a military officer or chief (*nāyaka*) in command (*amara*) of a body of troops.[82] The office of *nayaka* carried with it, according to the conventional scholarly understanding of the system, prebendal rights over land usually designated as *amaram* tenure (or *amaramākaṇi* or *amaramahale*), and it is supposed that, perhaps, three-fourths of the villages of Tamil country were under this form of tenure.[83] The proportion of land under this tenurial form for Vijayanagara as a whole is generally regarded to be about the same.[84] Two hundred *nayaka*s were presumed to have existed in the empire of the middle sixteenth century based upon the statement of Ferñao Nuniz for the years 1535-7.[85] However, Nuniz names only eleven of the most important of these officials and specifies the territory and revenue for which they were responsible as well as the number and composition of the troops which they were to maintain.[86]

[82] Krishnaswami, op. cit., 179-80. D.C. Sircar (*Indian Epigraphical Glossary* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1966) defines *nāyaka* as a royal officer or ruling chief (p. 214).

[83] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 180.

[84] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 180.

[85] Sewell, op. cit., p. 389.

[86] Ibid., pp. 384 ff.

In an exhaustive search of inscriptional records of the Vijayanagara period to about A.D. 1530, Krishnaswami was able to find references to a larger number of *nayaka*s in Tamil country. Between A.D. 1371 and 1422, he finds six *nayaka*s mentioned; between A.D. 1440 and 1459, he finds six more; between A.D. 1465 and 1491, nine *nayaka*s are found; between A.D. 1491 and 1508, another ten are found; and during Krishnaraya's time, A.D. 1509 to 1530, a total of twenty-seven are mentioned in inscriptions.[87] These Tamil records[88] pertain to typical local, or segmentary leadership activities including gifts to temples, repair and construction of tanks, reclamation of waste, and the collection of dues from temples. In none of these records, nor in any other Vijayanagara inscriptions, are there references to payments by *nayaka*s to the emperor or his officials; except for the account of Nuniz (Paes does not refer to these arrangements), there is no corroboration of what have been regarded as the 'feudal obligations' of *nayaka*s.

The political history of the Vijayanagara state is essentially the history of great Telugu *nayaka*s, their formidable military capabilities, their patrimonial power, and their relations to religious leaders in a new level of authority everywhere in the southern peninsula. Each of these aspects of Vijayanagara politics — except perhaps the last — have been explored at least partially in the extant historical literature without attempting to account for their existence or their interconnections. These factors are addressed below without, it must be urged, claiming that the answers offered are final.

However assiduous the effort by Vijayanagara historians to elaborate the structure of politics of the time, the core of their discussions has pivoted on the great *nayaka*s of the kingdom. All evidence turns upon their exploits and their conflicts, whether one considers the three genre of literary sources — Hindu, Muslim, and European — or the inscriptions of the several centuries of the

[87] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 181-6.

[88] All the inscriptions noted by Krishnaswami were in Tamil. It is in fact rare for Vijayanagara records in Tamil country, until the time of the Nayaka Kingdoms of Tanjavur and Madurai, to be in other languages. The Nayaka kingdoms did occasionally inscribe stones in Telugu and Sanskrit as noted by Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, pp. 47-8. Another of the rare exceptions is that noted in the *A.R.E.*, 1905, referring to number 38 of 1905, an undated inscription in Kannada mentioning one Lingappa, son of Chikka Koneri Nayaka, at Padaīvidu in Tondaimandalam (modern Tindivanam taluk, South Arcot).

Vijayanagara state, or whether one relies, as Venkataramanayya does, upon the local accounts collected by Colin Mackenzie. There have been few efforts to go beyond, or behind, these great political figures, to discover the structural framework within which they operated. Ever and again, it is to the powerful personages of the empire on whom attention is riveted: the kings themselves, of course, their close warrior kinsmen and other Telugu *nayaka*s upon whose military abilities all rested, and upon Brahman agents and commanders who, along with the peasant-caste *nayaka*s, played the most crucial political parts in the affairs of state. That this attention from historians is warranted is simple to demonstrate in any of the four Vijayanagara dynasties. Consider the period of Achyutaraya's succession, a time when the empire was at its greatest strength following the reign of Krishnaraya.

Then, warrior kinsmen were sources of significant support to Achyuta. When his brother, the great Krishnaraya died, Achyuta's position was secured against the powerful Aliya Ramaraya, a brother-in-law of the late king, by two of Achyuta's own brothers-in-law: Pedda and Chinna Salakaraju. The Salakaraju brothers continued to serve Achyuta as among his most successful and reliable generals as did another brother-in-law, Cevappa Nayaka.[89] And, after the death of Achyutaraya, in A.D. 1542, one of the Salakarajus murdered the late king's nephew and successor, Venkata I.[90] Throughout the third dynasty, the record of minor rebellions in complicity with one or several great *nayaka*s is a dismaying chapter which is usually euphemistically discussed under the heading of 'police arrangements'.[91] In Tamil country, intrigues among warriors linked to the royal house by agnatic or affinal bonds was less important than in the northern parts of the empire, but they were not absent. By the late sixteenth century the political arena of these Telugu political giants was the entire peninsula. The Brahman commander and minister Saluva Narasimha Nayaka, or Sellappa, who, with the Salakaraju brothers, assured the Vijayanagara throne to Achyuta in A.D. 1529, was rewarded with control of Tanjore, the richest territory in the empire. Sellappa revolted against Achyuta in A.D. 1531 in alliance with other *nayaka*s of the south. The reasons for this revolt appear to have been the differences with Aliya

[89] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in Third Dynasty*, pp. 6, 13, 454.
[90] Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 299.
[91] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, pp. 262-5.

Ramaraya; Sellappa had thwarted Ramaraya's ambitions to the throne at the death of Krishnaraya and was now being made to pay for that by the still powerful Ramaraya.[92]

In explaining the dominating character of the powerful Telugu warriors to whom the title *nayaka* was affixed, two factors appear most important. One was the sheer success of arms of these warriors; the other is the significant role played by Tamil country and the acceptance of Telugu rule by its chiefs during the Vijaya-nagara period.

Reasons for the military success of Vijayanagara warriors against their Hindu and Muslim rivals are hardly considered in the existing literature on the Vijayanagara state. This is peculiar since all have differentiated the Vijayanagara state from others on the basis of its martial character and achievements. An unchanging dharmic ideology is presumed to account for the successes of the several dynasties; yet, as is clear from the records of Vijayanagara, the major victims of Vijayanagara military power were not Muslims but Hindus, and a major factor in this success were Muslim soliders in Vijayanagara armies. Clearly, other kinds of explanations are necessary.

One that would appear to deserve serious consideration is that the success of Vijayanagara armies was a direct consequence of their experience with and imitation of Muslim armies, their tactics and weapons. The founding brothers of the first dynasty had served in Muslim armies, and it was against Muslim soldiers that there was intermittent conflict for two centuries. Nor is the military importance of the Portuguese, with whom the Vijayanagara rulers maintained friendly relations, to be ignored.

A second explanation, already briefly mentioned above as differentiating the process of extending the overlordship of the Chola and Vijayanagara kings, involved relationships between the latter and their Telugu agents with the leaders of Vaishnava secta-rian orders (*saṁpradāyas*). As this relationship was dependent upon the military capabilities of Telugu warriors, it is to this matter that attention is first given.

Two military factors appear significant: one was the improve-ment in cavalry warfare and the other, the use of artillery. Horse warfare is among the oldest elements of Indo-Aryan culture and

[92] Ibid., pp. 26-33 and Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 200-5.

a well-recognized part of armies in both the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.[93] However, the mounted warrior appears to come into his own in South India in the armies of Vijayanagara. It has been suggested that the Vijayanagara kings were as famed as 'lords of the horse' (*aśvapati*) as the imperial Gangas of Orissa were famed as 'lords of the elephant' (*gajāpati*).[94] This suggestion is supported by the Mahanavami festival already discussed.

At first glance, the importance of horses is puzzling since the Vijayanagara rulers were completely dependent upon the importation of war-horses of quality. Considerable notice has been taken of this trade in horses from Ormuz and other western Asian trade centres by foreign commentators since the time of Marco Polo.[95] According to the Portuguese visitors to Vijayanagara, and Nuniz was there as a horse trader[96] Krishnaraya purchased 13,000 Arabian (Ormuz) horses and country-bred horses each year. The king kept the best of these for himself.[97] Saluva Narasimha, before Krishnaraya, is reported to have paid a substantial sum for imported horses whether dead or alive.[98] The establishment of Muslim powers in the Deccan and the long-standing hostility between them and the Vijayanagara state must have eliminated or curtailed the availability of horses bred in northern India or imported from Central Asia.[99] With country-bred horses of poor quality in South India (in apparent contrast to those of Maratha country so skilfully used by Sivaji and his successors somewhat later) the Vijayanagara state sought and apparently attained a monopoly of horses fit for military use.

It must also have been true that military horses were a significant political currency and source of political control by the Vijayanagara rulers. The supply of strong horses would have extended the range of effective political control of subordinates, local warriors of the time. There would thus be strong inducements on the part

[93] Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, p. 250; this includes chariot and cavalry warfare.

[94] Sircar, *Indian Epigraphy*, p. 339 n.; also his 'Sūryavamsi Gajapatis of Orissa', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, v. 33 (September 1957), p. 275.

[95] *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. by Ronald Latham, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1958, p. 237.

[96] Sewell, op. cit., p. 235; his ventures were not remunerative, it is noted.

[97] According to Nuniz, ibid., pp. 381-2.

[98] According to Nuniz, ibid., p. 307.

[99] This trade is noted in Marco Polo, op. cit., p. 151.

of local notables to assure themselves of a supply of horses and, especially, a source which remained accessible from one year to another. Horse breeding and care were notoriously poor according to foreign commentators.[100]

Of course, warriors with strong mounts constituted both a source of strength and danger to the Rayas of Vijayanagara. The more mobile and powerful subordinate chiefs were, the more effective the army which could be brought to the field against the formidable armies of Muslim and Hindu enemies. However, the same cavalry capability could be and was used against the Vijayanagara kings as the rebellions of Telugu *nayaka*s instruct. This latter hazard could be reduced in several ways. One was for the rulers to monopolize access to superior military horses by paying a high price to those importing and trading in horses, even dead horses. Another means was to establish greater control over the coastal markets to which horses came; this was apparently attempted by Krishnaraya and later under the forceful Ramaraya.[101] Finally, mobile strength could be checked in its long-term effects by strongly fortified garrisons of reliable soldiers of the sort to which reference is repeatedly made in the poem, the *Amuktamalyada*, attributed to Krishnaraya.

But there is another military factor which is almost totally ignored by Vijayanagara historians; that is the use of artillery by the Vijayanagara armies. The earliest experience of artillery by Vijayanagara armies occurred in a late fourteenth century battle between Bukka I and the Bahmani Sultan Muhammad.[102] But, unlike the perfection of cavalry techniques which must have been learned from Deccani Muslims, it is probable that the use of artillery was more a consequence of later contact with the Portuguese.[103] Doubts have been raised about the proficiency in the use of artillery by Hindus, as compared to their Muslim opponents, but this deficiency was off-set by the use of Muslim and Portuguese soldiers by the Rayas. We have the story, well-worn by its demons-

[100] Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, p. 254. This was true notwithstanding the attention in sastric literature to care of horses (*see* V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India*, Macmillan & Co., Ltd, Madras 1944), pp. 174-9.

[101] These expeditions and their results are still the subject of scholarly controversy (*see* Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 212-16, 233-5).

[102] Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, pp. 262-3; the date of this battle is A.D. 1368.

[103] This observation was made by Ramachandra Dikshitar, op. cit., pp. 105-6.

tration of the religious tolerance of the Vijayanagara rulers, of Devaraya II keeping a Koran beside his throne so that his Muslim soldiers could swear allegiance properly.[104] Muslim soldiers served in Vijayanagara armies from at least the early fifteenth century, and from Paes and Nuniz a century later, there are descriptions of the use of artillery as well as muskets and other weapons involving gunpowder. The Portuguese accounts of the battle of Raichur in A.D. 1520, record that the Muslim commander Salabat Khan used artillery and his 500 Portuguese mercenaries also used guns. Against these, Krishnaraya's soldiers included musketeers, but there is no reference to artillery. However, among the spoils of the Raya's victory were 400 heavy cannons and numerous smaller guns.[105] There is little question therefore of the development of the use of artillery and other firearms by Hindu soldiers during this time; they augmented the firepower of Muslim and Portuguese auxiliaries in Vijayanagara armies.

Changes in the form of warfare in South India must have contributed to the persistent success of the Vijayanagara rulers against their Hindu rivals. Increasingly effective cavalry and artillery also explain the strategy of royal fortresses manned by special troops and commanded by dependable officers. Dozens of important fortresses are mentioned in Vijayanagara inscriptions and in the major literary sources of the sixteenth century.[106] In inscriptions, the Sanskrit term *durga*, 'fort', also acquired the additional meaning of the territory under the influence of a fortress, and the title which is taken by Vijayanagara historians to mean 'provincial governor' literally means 'the officer (or chief) over a fort': *durga daṇṇaik*.[107] This designation emphasizes the importance of forti-

[104] Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, pp. 259-60.

[105] Sewell, op.cit., pp. 327, 342-3. Saletore, op. cit., v. 1, p. 417, cites an anonymous work entitled, *Bakhair of Rama Raya* which purports to be a detailed description of the Vijayanagara army at the time of the Battle of Rahshasa-Tangadi. It refers to artillery pieces, casks of gunpowder, and gunners. The report is unbelievable owing to the numbers cited: 2343 'great guns', 99 million casks of powder and 9 trillion bullocks. An earlier discussion of the *Bakhair* by S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar makes no reference to these numbers (*Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture*, pp. 172-88; also *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, v. 3, p. 207).

[106] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, pp. 170-1 with special reference to the *Rayavacaka* of the 16th C.

[107] *Daṇṇaik* is a corrupt form of *daṇḍanāyaka* (Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 83).

fied places as well as the fact that the great officials of the Vijayanagara state were not civil, but military officials. This last point is somewhat surprising when it is noted that most of the *durga daṇṇaik*s were Brahmans according to inscriptions. These references thus corroborate the literary evidence of a policy of Krishnaraya to place reliance on fortresses and to entrust them to Brahmans. The didactic poem, the *Amuktamalyada*, attributed to Krishnaraya, gives an almost equivalent importance to forts as to Brahmans; in fact these two subjects are treated together. Repeatedly, the (royal?) poet instructs that fortresses are to be strong, well-manned, and under the control of Brahmans.[108]

It is difficult to resist the temptation of comparing the fortresses of the Vijayanagara kings with the only other massive structures of the age under Brahman custodianship, Hindu temples. This is occasionally noted in the historical literature as in the case of the hill temple of Simhachalam (Vishakhapatnam district) in modern Andhra-Pradesh.[109] During the eighteenth century warfare among English, French, and Muslim forces in what was then called 'the Carnatic', temples were frequently used by all combatants. Orme reported on the suitability of temples for this purpose: 'all pagodas on the coast of Coromandel are built on the same general plan. . . a large area which is commonly square, is enclosed by a wall 15 or 20 feet high. . . .'[110], and he referred to numerous temples used as fortifications.[111] It would be surprising if during the Vijayanagara period, when the construction of great walled temples reached full development, they were not used or were not seen as potentially useful for military purposes by their builders, who were for the most part locality magnates.

Superior military capability based upon cavalry and artillery as well as strategically placed fortified places under the control of reliable troops and Brahmans, especially Telugu Brahmans: these were the principal components of Vijayanagara authority

[108] A. Rangasvami Sarasvati, 'Political Maxims of the Emperor-Poet, Krishnadevaraya', *Journal of Indian History*, v. 4 (January 1926), verse 207, p. 65; verse 255, pp. 72-3; verse 270, p. 74.

[109] K. Sundaram, *The Simhachalam Temple* Simhachalam [Temple] Devasthanam, Simhachalam, 1969, pp. 135-6.

[110] Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan from the Year MDCCXLV*, London, 1803, v. 1, p. 117.

[111] Ibid., pp. 113, 127, 147, 171, and *passim*.

in the southern peninsula. Another element which is taken by scholars to be part of the foundation of Vijayanagara authority was the *nayaka* system, that is, the functions and relationships among the several hundred Telugu warriors in control of substantial territories distributed over the entire South Indian macro region and presumably responsive to directives of the Vijayanagara rulers. Is this a correct understanding of the role of the *nayaka*s?

As already noticed, the extant historiography on the *nayaka* system is at least confusing, even contradictory. The exact or even approximate number of such personages and their territorial jurisdictions are unknown; these questions have never been comprehensively investigated. *Nayaka*s are described by the Portuguese chroniclers of the sixteenth century, Paes and Nuniz, as agents of the centralized control of the Rayas. The evidence of Vijayanagara inscriptions and the later Mackenzie manuscripts present a different picture; one of territorial magnates pursuing political ends which, at times at least, collided with the aims of the Rayas as these may (indeed must) be inferred. Between these two opposed conceptions there are other views of the *nayaka* system, such as Krishnaswami's recent presentation of the system as 'feudalism'. In the work of Nilakanta Sastri, several views of *nayaka*s may be discerned. His 1946 publication, *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, contrasts the Vijayanagara *nayaka*s before and after the battle of Rakshasi-Tangadi in A.D. 1565, in the following words: 'The nāyakas, who were absolutely dependent upon the royal will... [until 1565] acquired a status of semi-independence.'[112] Later, in his *History of South India*, Sastri implies a somewhat less strongly centralized system before A.D. 1565. In his very brief discussion of Vijayanagara political, administrative, and military organization, he states that in addition to a large standing army supported, in part, from:

> ... crown lands, annual tributes from feudatories and provincial governors... military fiefs studded the whole length and the breadth of the empire, each under a *nāyak* or military leader authorized to collect revenue and administer a specified area provided he maintained an agreed number of elephants, horses, and troops ever ready to join the imperial forces in war.[113]

[112] *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, v. 3, p. 299.

[113] The 1955 edition pp. 295-6; 1958 edition, subsequent editions, pp. 296-7.

In a yet more recent work, published almost ten years after that cited immediately above, the conception of *nayaka*s as officials under direct central supervision is drastically altered. Here, Sastri writes:

> Vijayanagar became the focus of resurgent Hindu culture and offered a more successful resistence to Islam in this part of the country than anywhere else. So it was a long military vigil. As there was no room for weak or incompetent rulers on the throne, there were revolutions resulting in a change of dynasty and renewal of strength. *The empire is best looked upon as a military confederacy of many chieftains* cooperating under the leadership of the biggest among them.[114]

Here is a virtual denial of anything approximating the centralized political system of which Sastri spoke in his 1946 work, except, possibly, when an unusual warrior — a Krishnadevaraya — occupied the throne. Here, too, in this 1964 statement of Sastri, the threat of Muslim domination is given continued saliency as a reason for the politico-military changes of the Vijayanagara period. However, Sastri's most recent formulation of the essential character of the 'empire . . . as a military confederation of many chieftains. . . .' is an extreme position. It is a position which goes too far in what may be seen as an effort to correct the early conception of a centralized polity; it fails to distinguish the differential concerns and capabilities of intrusive Telugu warriors from those of other military chieftains, and it therefore fails to appreciate the way in which the great Telugu warriors dominate the political scene. The Vijayanagara period is the age of Telugu military power and glory. Most of those possessing substantial military capability were Telugus, and they comprise a new intermediary level of authority in what continued to be a segmentary state in South India.

As to the title, *nayaka*, it occurs in Karnataka at least three centuries before the establishment of the Vijayanagara state, and it is found in Andhra country at least two centuries before the Vijayanagara state. Derrett refers to the term in inscriptions of the late eleventh century and substitutes the English 'captain' implying a military office.[115] However, Derrett mentions other evidence,

[114] *Sources of Indian History*, 1964, p. 79. Emphasis added to the original.

[115] *The Hoysaḷas*, p. 25 with reference to Chalukya inscriptions of A.D. 1062 and 1068 and on p. 188 where he speaks of *nayaka*s as the lowest commanders of foot or cavalry.

notably an inscription of the middle twelfth century refers to a *nayaka* of Holalkere (in modern Chitaldrug district, Karnataka) 'who recognized no overlord', suggesting not a military office, but a personage of local power.[116] Telugu literary works and inscriptions from Andhra of about the same time also mention *nayaka*s in the same ambiguous fashion. Kakatiya records of the middle and late twelfth centuries refer to *nayaka* of specific localities as dependants to great families of local dominance.[117] There are even *ūri-nāyakulu* and *grāma nāyakulu*, that is 'village nayakas', mentioned in Andhra.[118] Later inscriptions of the Kakatiya rulers Rudramadevi (A.D. 1259-95), the queen Rudramba (*c.* A.D. 1273), Ambadeva, and Prataparudra (A.D. 1295-1332) are interpreted in such a manner as to place *nayaka*s into a formal military organization. Thus, there is the ambiguous tradition of the 'seventy-five *nayaka*s' who died defending the Kakatiya queen Rudramba's claim to the throne against Ambadeva, and equally vague references to a *nāyankara* system.[119]

The term '*nayaka*' is, in fact, a very ancient Sanskrit one denoting a person of prominence and leadership, particularly military leadership.[120] During the medieval period, in South India, *nayaka* refers to the bhakti relationship between god (*nāyaka*) and devotee (*nāyika*). It is a term upon which too much has been permitted to be borne by modern historians concerned with the analysis of the political system. When we may point to usage as diverse as that cited by Derrett and others for warriors of specific local dominance to that of a Gajapati inscription of the fifteenth century

[116] Ibid., p. 71.

[117] Warfare among local magnates in Palnadu (Guntur district) of the late twelfth century, according to the *Palnativirula Charita*, was waged by *nayaka* warriors identified with specific places (e.g. Malyala, Komaravelli); Venkataramanayya and Somasekhara Sarma, 'Kākatiyas of Warangal', in Yazdani, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 593, 596.

[118] Inscriptions of the late twelfth century, Narasimha Rao, op. cit., p. 121.

[119] Yazdani, op. cit., v. 2, pp. 622, 630-1, 634. The following example casts fundamental doubt upon the existence of something called the '*nayankara* system' at this time. In the time of Prataparudra, the writers speak of the king 'remodelling the *nāyankara* system, which appears to have come into vogue during the reigns of his predecessors, with a well-equipped army of 900,000 archers [!] besides cavalry and elephants', p. 644.

[120] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 536, cites usage in the *Mahabharata*.

in which the King, Kapilesvara, is called a *nayaka*,[121] it is necessary to question the meaning generally ascribed by historians of Vijayanagara: 'one who holds land from the Vijayanagar kings on condition of offering military service'.[122] The more prudent reading of the term *nayaka* is the generalized designation of a powerful warrior who was at times associated with the military enterprises of kings, but who at all times was a territorial magnate in his own right.

To the extent that it is possible to speak of a *nayaka* system, this notion has to do with the existence of a new level of intermediary authority in South India. The powerful combination of a technically superior royal army, and strategically placed fortifications under Brahman commanders constitute one part of the Vijayanagara political system. The other part consisted of Telugu *nayaka*s who, with astonishing ease, established and maintained their authority over most of the southern peninsula, especially Tamil country.

Nayaka authority in Tamil country certainly hastened or perhaps even completed the demise of those local institutions which together provided each locality segment of the Chola state with basic coherence: the local body of *nattar*s acting corporately through their territorial assembly, the *nadu*, or, latterly, combined with other locality bodies in the greater *nadu*, the *periyanadu*; *brahmadeya*s acting as the ritual and ideological cores of each locality. That these several institutions had already begun to lose their important place in Tamil country as early as the twelfth century in some cases seems clear. Their decline cannot be attributed to the Vijayanagara state, but must be seen as the result of changes in Tamil society and amongst the Tamils themselves as discussed in chapter six. Still, the scope for the politically integrative function of ritual authority of the segmentary state remained. Neither a Tamil state nor a Karnataka state emerged to challenge the Vijayanagara state, to attract the recognition of indigenous locality chiefs, or to reinforce the claims of the latter to their ancient locality control. That recognition was instead extended to the Telugu *nayaka*s whose original presence in the macro region outside Andhra country was as military agents of the Vijayanagara kings. These Telugu

[121] *E.I.*, v. 33 (1959-60), D.C. Sircar, 'Two Grants of Raghudeva', verse 10, p. 4.

[122] Cited in Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, p. 214, based on the usage of Mahalingam, *Administrative and Social Life in Vijayanagara*.

warriors were not, however, to remain simply agents of the Vijayanagara kings; they could not because there was no political framework through which an agency of this sort was capable of being sustained. Telugu *nayakas* quickly became locality figures in their own right, encouraging the settlement of other Telugus to strengthen their control over local Tamil and Karnataka chiefs as well as to buttress their relations with the distant but still intimidating power of the Rayas. With respect to the Rayas, Telugu *nayakas* continued to express their agency position (*karttā*). Thus ensconced, they became a new intermediary level of authority within a changed, but nonetheless recognizable, segmentary state.

The Vijayanagara state was left intact and operated through the sub-stratum of indigenous chieftainships, as Venkataramanayya observed. The earliest invasion of Tamil country under Kumara Kampana resulted first in the defeat of, then the restoration to authority of Pandyan chiefs in the far south.[123] This pattern persisted throughout the Tamil country. As long as the Tamil chiefs did not seek to establish kingships which could compete with that of Vijayanagara as the legitimate source of ritual sovereignty, it was an arrangement which satisfied the requirements of the Rayas. Where this was attempted or threatened, as in the case of the Bana chieftain Bhuvane Raviran Samarakolahalan in the 1460s or, later in the century, the Pandyan Jatavarman Kulasekara Parakrama, this was treated as rebellion by the Telugu *nayakas* of Tamil country with the support of the Rayas.[124]

In a similar way, the Rayas treated as rebellion and dealt harshly with the claims of the great Telugu *nayakas* to the independent status of king. The latter assiduously maintained their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness in Tamil country and elsewhere they also continued, on the whole, to claim to be royal agents. Thus, they stood forth as effective representatives of Vijayanagara supremacy in the macro region, and everywhere constituted a powerful intermediary level of rule. As long as these *nayakas* issued inscriptions as the agents and in the name of the Rayas and as long as they joined with the Rayas in the latters' conflicts with Muslim and Hindu kings, these Telugu warriors contributed essential strength to the Vijayanagara segmentary state. This they, and

[123] Heras, *Aravidu Dynasty*, pp. 107-8.

[124] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 118-28, 157-60.

Tamil chiefs who also adopted the title of *nayaka*, could do as the territorial magnates they were. And, what is of great importance, this intermediary role was not a usurpation, an illegitimate appropriation of authority. Neither Telugu nor Tamil chiefs were completely, nor even primarily, agents or officials of the Vijayanagara state. Or if, as in the case of the four commanders whom Krishnaraya sent 'to pacify . . . the Nayakas in the Tamil country' as Krishnaswami puts it,[125] such powerful men might begin as agents or officials of the Rayas, but they very soon were transformed into centres of power independent of the Rayas and were ultimately transformed into fully competing '*Nayaka* kingdoms'. Such transformations to full independence from the Rayas and, further, armed opposition were usurpations, however, and these constituted a fundamental threat to the Vijayanagara segmentary state.

It was to cope with this basic instability of relationships between the Vijayanagara rulers and the new intermediary level of Telugu warriors that the significant place in the political system of Telugu Brahmans must be seen. Brahmans of the Vijayanagara period, particularly Telugu Brahmans, had become political men as never before. In contrast to the Brahman notables of the Chola period who were residents of *brahmadeya*s and custodians of canonical learning, the great Brahmans of the Vijayanagara period were men of the court and administration. It is true that the *ghaṭikā*s of the Chola period and earlier were places where Brahmans instructed others, including other Brahmans in secular, even military, knowledge and that, coincident with these activities, made contributions to the Chola segmentary state in ways already discussed. It is further true that in personages like the *brahmadhirāja* are found Brahmans with administrative careers and considerable political influence. But, the contrast between the two periods with respect to the role of Brahmans is nevertheless striking.

Referring to Andhra during the Vijayanagara period, Venkatarammayya states:

> The majority of the educated Brahmans sought to enter the government service which offered them bright careers. They were especially trained to become accountants and administrators. The imperial secretariat was almost entirely manned by men of this class. In the Telugu country,

[125] Ibid., pp. 193-4.

> they separated from the other Brahmans, and formed a subcaste known as the *Niyōgis*. There is reason to believe that Brahmans of this class were not very orthodox in the observance of their religious rites. They became ministers, commanders of armies, and governors of provinces. Every Brahman mother wished that her son should become a *durgādhipati* or governor of a fort.[126]

The Brahman Vidyaranya and his kinsmen were ministers of the founders of the Vijayanagara state. They provided not simply political guidance,[127] but a perhaps vital element of legitimacy to the Sangama brothers who were, according to the traditions of the dynasty, won back to Hinduism after having become Muslims.[128]

But, in keeping with the martial character of the Vijayanagara state, it was as military commanders that Brahmans were most conspicuous. Until the end of Achyutaraya's reign, Brahmans were among the great military leaders. Gopanaraya and Somanandanatha commanded Vijayanagara forces in the conquest of Tamil country during the first dynasty,[129] and Brahman advisors and commanders of Krishnaraya's time were very prominent: Saluva Timma, Saluva Govindaraja, Rayasam (or Ayyaparasa), Kondamarasu, Ramabhatlayya, Sellappa, Saluvayira, Narasimha, Karanika Mangarasayya, and Bacharasayya.[130] These and other Brahmans were of the Telugu Brahman sub-caste called Niyogi. As Venkataramanayya pointed out, this was a group which, despite its prestigious secular activities — or perhaps because of these activities — may have been forced to constitute an endogamous group because they could not maintain the high standards of orthodoxy of Telugu Brahmans of an earlier time.[131]

Most of the *durga daṇṇaik*s were Brahmans at least until the reign of Achyutaraya and possibly after that time. Their tasks were to build and hold fortresses in various parts of the empire, and the resources for this central element of Vijayanagara rule were realized by income from villages appropriated for the purpose

126 Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, pp. 354-6.

127 Vidyaranya was not simply the *purohita* of Bukka I, but a minister to whom is attributed the *Parasvara Madhaviya* a text on legal administration (ibid., p. 268).

128 Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, p. 227.

129 Rangasvami Sarasvati, op. cit., p. 85.

130 Ibid., Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 356, and Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 53, and *passim*.

131 One thinks here of the Karandai Plates of Rajendra Chola and the large number of Telugu Apastamba Brahmans who were brought into the Kaveri Basin.

by Vijayanagara military forces. Villages whose income was so committed were distinguished by the term, *bhaṇḍāravāḍa*, a term taken to differentiate what are called 'crown villages', from villages whose income was under the control of local military persons, or *amaram* villages. The preference for Brahmans as custodians of forts in the *Amuktamalyada* was based upon two factors: Brahmans would serve faithfully, meaning, perhaps, that they had no rule aspirations of their own, and they would serve efficiently, meaning they would be in competition with 'kshatriya and sūdra officers'. Levity, or poetic licence may be attributed to the verse in the *Amuktamalyada* which refers to this striving of Brahmans for military accomplishment 'lest they [Brahmans] should be laughed at by *kshatriya* and *sūdra* officers'.[132] However, in a completely serious way, competition between Brahmans serving the Rayas and non-Brahman warriors may be seen as having been essential.

Comparison with the Chola state is again instructive. During the Chola period, Brahmans became politically important as an important ideological element of the segmentary state. Brahmans then provided the means of replicating in every locality the dharmic credentials of rule for which the Cholas themselves created the model in the Kaveri Basin. Legitimacy for the *nattar* and other local chiefs depended partly on the exchange nexus between themselves and Brahmans and those brahmanical institutions found in *brahmadeyas*: essentially the exchange of material resources from the former for royal honours from the latter. The ability of Brahmans to confer such honours derived from their recognized ritual supremacy and from their non-competitiveness with established secular rulers.

To sustain this exchange during Chola times, some of the most valuable productive resources under the control of the *nattar* — well-developed, irrigated land in the fertile plains — were placed under the management of Brahman *sabhas*, permanently and conspicuously alienated from local, peasant control. Such grants to self-regulating Brahman settlements did not diminish the locality control of the *nattar*; on the contrary, these grants

[132] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 154; citing verse 217. The verse in full is given in *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, v. 3, p. 154. A king who confers nobility on a Brahman prospers; for the Brahman stands at the post of duty even at considerable risk, either to avoid the ridicule of the Ksatriya and Sūdra officers, or in emulation of the other Brahman officers of the king's service.

enhanced their power by validating the claim of the king-like appropriateness of *nattar* control.

The same attributes of Brahmans which commended their ideological role in Chola times facilitated their political roles in Vijayanagara times, but with a difference. By the fifteenth century, gift-giving (*dāna*) to Brahmans for their exclusive enjoyment was no longer a necessary nor perhaps even an appropriate form of dharmic activity. Gifts now went to temple deities for the protection of all, or gifts were given to sectarian leaders (*ācāryas*, *maṭhādipatis*) for the guidance of all. Brahmans as temple servants and as sectarian leaders were beneficiaries of this dharmic largesse to be sure, but the conception of the Brahman had surely changed. It was not to individual Brahmans or to groups of Brahmans for the preservation of their learning as before (in the form of *ekabhōgam* or *brahmadeya* grants), but to Brahmans as integral elements of the political system of the age as well as of the temple-sectarian nexus of *bhakti* Hinduism that support was given. Arising from the first were new political roles for Brahmans. These roles were based, as before, upon the dignity and prestige which their birth and learning continued to confer and upon their capacity to act as reliable political agents. One such important, new political role was collaboration with the Rayas (and in time with other great political personages) in controlling the new stratum of warrior intermediaries between the kings and locality chiefs. A prime way that this collaboration was realized was in the placing of strategically located fortresses under Brahman commanders. These Brahman notables were considered the agents (*daṇṇāyakas*) of the Rayas in the territory under the influence of the fortress. The Brahman-commanded fortress therefore represented both the military supremacy of the Rayas in a direct physical way and the ritual sovereignty of the Rayas as an ordinary garrison could not. Arising from the religious nexus were other new politically significant roles which are considered below in the discussion of religion and sect during the Vijayanagara period.

Bhaṇḍārvada, or 'crown' villages appear to have been the special source of income to defray the costs of building and maintaining strategic fortifications under Brahman commanders and at the command of the Rayas. In this sense, the *bhaṇḍāravada* village replaced the *brahmadeya* of Chola times and symbolizes, in resource terms, the changing political role of Brahmans during the Vijaya-

nagara period. It was a political role for which Brahmans of the time were uniquely endowed, and it was the most certain way of controlling the new stratum of warriors of that time.

It is important to stress that this warrior stratum was essentially the creation of the Vijayanagara rulers whose incursions into territories outside the northern heartland of the kingdom were responsible for establishing the warrior intermediaries. Incursions of Vijayanagara armies began with the first Vijayanagara kings and continued through Krishnaraya's reign when, according to accounts in the Mackenzie manuscripts, the commanders of the Vijayanagara army which invaded Tamil country, became the nuclei of the *Nayaka* kingdoms of the next century.[133] From the outset, in fact, these Telugu warriors themselves or their descendants, became potential focuses of power opposing that of the Rayas.

Up to, and including the time of Krishnaraya and Achyutaraya, this use of Brahmans to check the opposition of Telugu soldiery was successful. After the defeat at Talikota (or Rakshasi-Tangadi, two villages closer to the actual battleground against Deccani Muslims) in early 1565, this system broke down in the heartland of the Vijayanagara state. It continued to operate in Tamil country for another century, however, at least until the end of the 'civil war' among the great Telugu *nayaka*s in Tamil country in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

While it is not possible to be certain that all or most of the Brahmans involved in imperial politics — as fortress commanders or in other military and administrative roles — were Telugus, there is little question that the principal non-Brahman military leaders and many, if not most, of their followers were men of Andhra country. It was precisely this movement of Telugu warriors into Tamil country and their constituting there a new intermediary level of authority which gives the Vijayanagara segmentary state one of its distinctive characteristics. This intermediary level of warriors, strangers in many parts of the empire, may not be seen as 'brokers', to use a fashionable term in contemporary Indian social science analysis. That is, they do not face in two directions linking local and supralocal levels of society and are thus not valued and rewarded by both levels.

[133] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 194.

Nayaka warriors were essentially conquerors who superimposed their supralocality control over indigenous chiefs and expropriated a portion of the wealth of the area for their support. They may have established their locality control as part of an 'invasion' such as that recounted in the Mackenzie manuscripts for the period of Krishnaraya, but they remained as supralocal rulers in their own right and with a continued identity as outsiders.

The ease with which this control was established over Tamil localities and the stability of this control virtually until the middle of the eighteenth century in most places is as noteworthy as the failure of these Telugu warriors to maintain stable relationships with the great Rayas. It is another striking characteristic of the Vijayanagara state that such serious resistence for which there are records do not speak of that of Tamil chiefs or the Tamil population against the new supralocality élite of Telugu warriors, but of the Telugu warriors against their overlords in the north. Places over which the Telugu *nayaka*s established their control remained what they had been in the Chola state: segmentary parts of a whole. Most of the time until the end of the last Vijayanagara dynasty, these localities recognized the Vijayanagara overlordship in inscriptions. Many of these segments included numerous localities of an earlier time, especially in the ancient settled territories of Tanjavur and Madurai; other Vijayanagara segmentary territories, such as Ginjee in Tamil country, were new nuclei attracting new settlement from other places; and these three territories, plus Ikkeri in Karnataka, became the core tracts of the new generation of segmentary states in South India which followed the fall of the Vijayanagara state in the seventeenth century.

Land System

Elaborate systems of land tenure emerged in most of South India during the mature period of the Vijayanagara state, that is by the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The principles of these systems and the bases upon which they operated were fundamentally different from those of the Chola age.

Chola tenurial arrangements continued, even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to be based upon what might be called 'ethnic territoriality'. That is, land was held or, more precisely, income from it was realized by various individuals and groups

according to shared ethnicity within an autonomous locality. This locality, or *nadu*, was essentially that tract claimed, settled, and cultivated by a peasant people possessing a common ethnic identity, including a shared putative ancestry and, often, history of migration, a shared local loyalty, and a shared culture. These were the *nattar*, the people of the *nadu*. Somewhat separate form *nattar*, but still a part of the core ethnic collectivity, were traders in agricultural goods, the *nagārattār*, with a large measure of control over trade settlements within the locality.[134] Similarly, rights to landed income and substantial control over their settlements were granted to others, notably Brahmans, by this ethnically defined core population of a locality. Others who were permitted residential privileges and a place in the local economy, but no rights to landed income in most cases, were those who possessed skills and produced goods which, while valued, were regarded as of an order lower than, or at least different from agriculture. These non-agricultural, artisan-traders appear to have been excluded from full membership in *nadu* society and were accordingly disadvantaged until the late eleventh century when references to *idangai* military forces suggest an improvement in their fortunes. Others who were excluded from ethnic membership and from any rights, apart from affiliational protection of other locality groups, were untouchable labourers.

The Vijayanagara period affords the first view of a different land system, one approximating that of the early nineteenth century. Individuals and, to a greater extent, members of small, localized corporate groups were the primary holders of income rights in the land during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In contrast to the well-defined corporate groups by whom land income was regularly commanded during the Chola period, those of the later period were fragments of the earlier *nattar* groupings and others in new forms of affiliation and operating within the much narrower confines of largely autonomous villages.

Three elements of the land system of the Vijayanagara period serve to differentiate it from that of the Chola period. First, the basic unit of agrarian organization was but a part of what had

[134] Attention is directed to a recent doctoral thesis by Kenneth R. Hall, 'The *Nagaram* as a Marketing Center in Early Medieval South India', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Dept. of History, University of Michigan, 1975.

previously constituted the *nadu*. This reduced unit may be called a 'village' in the sense in which that term was used during the British period to designate a major agricultural settlement consisting of one or more residential sites, all of the fields of which were worked under the direction, if not exclusively with the labour, of those residents. A major share of income rights from the land, except in the case of some temple villages, perhaps, were similarly restricted to persons of the settlement. The older *nadu*, of which such village settlements had been part in Chola times, continued to be a kinship and marriage territory of importance for its agricultural peoples; for them it was also continued as a cult territory. But, land management, that is the unit in which land, labour, and capital were combined, had diminished from the *nadu* to the village. Secondly, those who managed agrarian activities were well-differentiated, individual 'big-men',[135] not the anonymous *nattar* of Chola times. Such powerful, local men were recruited from the dominant agricultural peoples of the immediate locality and often therefore were of the ancient *nattar*. However, by the fifteenth century everywhere in the macro region, there were few localities which had not been penetrated by 'outsiders' as the dominant agriculturists in some or many of its villages. 'Outsiders' in Tamil country might include such diverse groups as Telugu Reddis in villages of the Palar basin, in Tondaimandalam or the previously shunned and feared Kallars in the villages of the Kaveri basin. In these cases, the important men of villages ('*pedda ryots*' and 'mirasidars' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) might no longer be Choliyar Vellalas or Tondaimandala Vellalas, but Reddis and Kallars. But, whether they were of the ancient *nattar* or outsiders, these important men of the village exercised local control of a new and different sort from that of the Chola *nattar*. This is seen in the third major change of the Vijayanagara period, that is the rural entrepreneurship of village big men.

Together, these changes reflected a land system of far greater complexity than that of the Chola period, a system in which new structural features are clear (the new unit of land management,

[135] The notion of 'big man' is meant to distinguish power derived from wealth and achievement, not based upon office or birth, but ability; it is explored fully by Marshall Sahlins in 'Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, v. 5 (1963), pp. 285-303.

the village; the new leadership of powerful village big men; and the new activity of entrepreneurship which enriched the new leaders) and in which these structural elements were combined in such a way as to free land from the exclusive control of ancient ethnic groupings and to free villages from supralocal, territorial (*nadu* and *periyanadu*) control.

These changes marked the end of the ethnic territoriality of the Chola period and resulted from a process whose dynamics can first be located in the more advanced parts of the Tamil country, the central zones of the Chola segmentary state, during the twelfth century. In that time and in those places occurred the most impressive development of temple-centred urbanization, trade, and the emergence of more complex forms of localized society requiring increasingly adept leadership. Complicating this process during and after the fourteenth century was the intrusion into all parts of the macro region — but especially in the less advanced, intermediate and peripheral zones of the older segmentary state — of Telugu warriors who, in time, came to comprise part of a new intermediary leadership. With this new leadership came new groups of cultivators, labourers, and mercantile groups. The new political and economic migrants into Tamil country of the fourteenth century were attracted by its increasing wealth, and the interests of these migrant peoples were best served by encouraging the demise of ethnic territoriality in which they must forever be outsiders. The success of these warriors and their followers in establishing stable relationships with local Tamil and Karnatak chiefs and peasant peoples during the fifteenth century, is the most persuasive evidence that the earlier forms of ethnic organization had all but disappeared. Representatives of the ancient *nattar* of Tamil country had undergone substantial changes in their fortunes. Some few had risen to positions of chieftainship and instituted largely endogamous lineages of chiefs (as seen in the *paṭṭakkārar* of the Kongu Vellalas[136]) within older nattar communities. Most other ancient, dominant landed groups in Tamil country and others like the *okkulu* of Karnataka were content or compelled to reduce the scope of their control over

[136] Noticed in a record of the time of Malikarjuna, *A.R.E.* 1920, no.235 and in one dated A.D. 1622 (*A.R.E.* 1920, no.239) and recently noted in the ethnographic analysis by Brenda E.F. Beck, *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1972, pp. 40 ff.

agrarian resources to quite atomized villages. It was left to the congenial, supralocal authority of the new leadership of the Vijayanagara segmentary state to safeguard and even to advance essential forms of supralocal cooperation, including military protection, the maintenance of sacred places, and the adjudication of conflicts which could not be resolved within village society. These changes in agrarian organization are found reflected in the more complex variety of land tenure found during the Vijayanagara period as compared to any previous time.

Tenurial forms during the Chola period were quite simple. Ordinary land tenure was called, *veḷḷān vagai* (literally, 'cultivators' share') by which can only have been meant the shares of income commanded by the dominant peasant group of a locality. Thus, Subbarayalu states: 'the *Nāṭṭār* were none other than the representatives of the *Veḷḷānvagai villages*'.[137] This tenure accounted for 'the general class of villages' according to Appadorai[138] and 'the normal type of tax-paying village' according to K.A. Nilakanta Sastri.[139] In addition, there were special tenures pertaining almost exclusively to eleemosynary grants of village income and, for *brahmadeya*s, a high degree of autonomous governance. Chola copperplates and stone inscriptions which record grants to Brahmans of income from cultivated fields along with considerable control over the government of their settlements, it has been argued here, represent special arrangements, the very uniqueness of which required the detailed specificity found in such documents. Apart from these arrangements for groups of Brahmans, some income from land, as well as from trade and other sources, was granted to canonical temples as *devadana*. This was a relatively minor feature of the pre-fourteenth century, and support of non-canonical temples or to non-Brahman ritual specialists, which was continuous, is almost never referred to in inscriptions. Some income from cultivated lands was deployed to support military garrisons in the Chola country, but rarely elsewhere. In overwhelming part during the Chola period cultivable land and the income generated from it was under the control of the *nattar* to use and distribute as they saw fit. Nor is there evidence of tenurial changes until the Vijayanagara period.

[137] Subbarayalu, op. cit., pp. 34 ff.
[138] Appadorai, op. cit., v. 1, p. 154.
[139] *The Cōḷas*, p. 571.

It is usual for Vijayanagara historians to speak of three major tenurial categories. These are: *amara*, *bhaṇḍāravāda*, and *mānya*. In fact, these categories pertain to only one aspect of land tenure during the Vijayanagara period, namely, a classification of the disposition of the major portion of the proceeds of agricultural production *on a village basis*. Accordingly, the fewest villages were *bhaṇḍāravāda* or 'crown' villages, some portion of whose income went to support Vijayanagara fortresses in various parts of the empire; a larger number of villages contributed to the support of Brahmans, temples, *mathas* as *mānya* villages; and the greatest number of villages — estimated to comprise three-quarters of all villages — yielded a portion of their income to those with local dominance. The latter were designated as *amaranayakas*, hence the tenurial category *amaram*.[140]

There are two difficulties with this classification. The first is the contention that the Vijayanagara ruler was owner of the soil and thus that the holders of *mānya* and *amara* rights were 'lessees' of conditional tenements. It is supposed that holders of these rights were required, as a condition of holding the right, to perform certain specified services (e.g., ritual or military); these holders were also supposedly subject to unspecified restrictions regarding heritability, transfer, or sale. Such a position is simply untenable in the light of inscriptional evidence of all sorts of transactions involving land and in the light of much of the best scholarly interpretation of this evidence. The second difficulty in this classification of land tenure into 'crown villages', 'military service villages', and 'beneficial villages' is that there is no way of determining how many villages can be classified under any of these tenure classes. The idea that seventy-five per cent of all villages were military service villages is in no sense an estimate; it is, in fact, an assertion, unfortified by contemporary evidence, that all villages not designated 'crown villages' or alienated for religious purposes — and there is no way to estimate those numbers — were under presumed 'feudal' tenure.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, however, it is important to recognize that this classification system is based upon something

[140] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 180: 'Nearly three fourths of the land in Tamil country was held by military chiefs on this tenure'. The term *amaram* is taken to refer to military service tenure from the Sanskrit-derived Tamil word *amara* (Sanskrit: *samara*, Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 1170).

real. That is the saliency of the village unit in references to land-holding during the Vijayanagara period. One again notes the contrast with Chola arrangements in which lands from a great many villages were contributed to form a new *brahmadeya* settlement. In the founding of the Anaimangalam *brahmadeya* recorded in the 'Larger Leiden Plates' of Rajendra Chola I, twenty-six villages gave portions of their lands to the new settlement; the Karandai Plates of the same ruler refer to fifty-seven contributing villages.[141] In the Tamil portion of the latter plates, these fifty-seven villages are said to have been removed from the status of *veḷḷān vagai* and the rights (*kāṇiy-uḍaiyār*: literally 'right to possession of cultivable land')[142] of the cultivators (*kuḍi*) cancelled. Arrangements of the Vijayanagara period are very different; not only are there no longer records of the establishment of settlements like the great *brahmadeya*s of the Chola period, but there were few transactions which refer to lands outside a single village. At this time, the village has become the effective unit for land arrangements. And, such arrangements include more than the ultimate disposal of income transfers beyond the village proper; they pertain to that nexus of resource shares which a village had come to be.

Vijayanagara inscriptions are concerned with new and public claims upon shares of village income. To be stressed here is that the 'rights in land' always refer to shares of income, not 'dominion in land', and that in many cases such shares have always existed but were not before given the public and formal status achieved in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Another point of note is that the unit in which these income shares are mentioned is invariably that of a named village.

Vijayanagara records delineate categories of income shares based on the rights of the diverse groupings of which a village consisted. The Tamil term *amaramākāṇi* is understood as an 'estate' by most Vijayanagara writers[143] or, in Nilakanta Sastri's usage, a 'fief'.[144] The particle, *mākāṇi* in fact, denotes a fraction, one-

[141] The 'Larger Leiden Plates' are discussed in *E.I.*, v. 22 and on this matter, pp. 237-8. The 'Karandai Plates' are discussed in a typescript provided by the Government epigraphist, K.G. Krishnan.

[142] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', pp. xxiii, lxxxi.

[143] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 179; Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 180; *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. v *(amaramāgāṇi)*.

[144] *A History of South India* (1958 ed.), p. 297.

sixteenth,[145] and is best understood as a conventionalized share of agricultural income or production paid by those in control of agrarian production to those with local political authority (i.e., *amara*).

Amaram tenure of the Vijayanagara period was military tenure as most historians insist. It was the control over land and its products possessed by those with military capability. In this limited sense, Sircar's contention that *amaram* tenure is among the few exceptions to the total absence in early India of anything like 'feudal tenure' may be accepted.[146] This alone can scarcely justify feudal usage, and the rejection by Sircar of the concept of feudalism has been supported in this discussion. But, the analysis of *amaram* tenure here cannot be made to fit the category of 'land-lord' which Sircar insists is superior to the concept of 'feudalism' in early India. A major reason for this is that the concept of 'landlord' has not been defined by Sircar, not has the encompassing legal and political structure in which these 'land-lords' were supposed to have functioned ever been clarified.[147] Neither 'feudalism' nor 'landlordism' seize the essential character

[145] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 5, p. 3143; the one-sixteenth fraction is the sum of the fraction *mā*, one-twentieth, and *kāṇi*, one-eightieth; also, op. cit., v. 2, p. 859. Also, the reference to *'mā: ka:ṇi'* in S. Agesthialingam and S.V. Shanmugam, *The Language of Tamil Inscriptions 1250-1350 A.D.*, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, 1970, p. 191.

[146] D.C. Sircar, *Land System and Feudalism*, p. 57.

[147] Sircar's 'land' appeared to be created by the establishment of a 'free-holding' as a result of 'relegating the king's rights over the village to the donee (by a royal charter)', ibid., p. 20. The term 'free-hold' is old since such alienations according to Sircar were sometimes completely free of taxes and obligations, were sometimes partly free of these, and were, at times, not exempted at all from obligations to the king. Furthermore, the enumeration of twenty-one 'free-hold' rights on p. 21 consist of permutations of the conventional *aṣṭa-bhogam* (eight kinds of benefits or enjoyments of possession) which are not proof of a 'landlord' tenement or right. Finally, p. 14 contains a confusing discussion of the role of the king which is crucial in Sircar's conception. In this discussion, the king is regarded as the ultimate owner of land and, he continues, 'The royal charters . . . say that the free-holding was created by the king at the request of a subordinate whose name was mentioned in the (epigraphical) document only when he was of sufficient importance. When he (the subordinate) became more powerful, he would himself issue charters with the king's permission, and, when still more powerful, his charters would not even mention the name of the overlord. The next stage would of course be represented by his [the subordinate's] charters issued as an independent monarch. Thus, a landlord became a king.' !

of *amaranayaka*s as highly local and quite independent warrior chiefs. It is simply not the case that *amaranayaka*s were officials of the Vijayanagara government. There were to be sure great military commanders — *nayaka*s who were also the most important political movers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; but they were few. They were also Telugu commanders of Vijayanagara armies whose power derived from their military offices. Secondarily, the power of these Telugu grandees derived from territorial bases in Tamil country; these territories were the foundation for the new generation of segmentary states after the decline of the Vijayanagara state in the late sixteenth century. But the *nayaka* title was also used by locality chiefs along with older, local and vernacular forms of address.

Amaram tenure consisted essentially of the power to distribute or redistribute the proceedings of agrarian production and to set and collect those charges in kind or in cash to be paid to personages with local authority. These are powers enumerated by the most able student of modern South Indian land tenure, Sundararaja Iyengar; to these powers, he notes, the term *amarakam* is attached during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[148] The term *amara* does indeed refer to war and some *amaranayaka*s were great military commanders. But, the term *amaram*, more broadly, denotes the rights and powers of local magnates.

Another important and publicly acknowledged category of income shares is that paid to 'village servants' upon whom much attention was lavished in early British records. According to the scholarly literature dealing with the medieval situation, those who performed services for the agricultural population of a village or a locality were called by the term *āyagār* in many parts of the macro region. This term means 'those possessing income' (*āyam* in Tamil).[149] According to the established historiography, *āyagār*s, the body of village servants, displaced village assemblies of the Chola period (*sabha* and *ur*) as the local management institutions. Thus, we have Krishnaswami's statement that: '. . . the introduction of the Nāyaṉkara Āyāgar systems in the provincial and local spheres by the Vijayanagar rulers brought about the decline and disappearance of the local institutions in the Tamil country'.[150]

[148] Op. cit., p. 83.
[149] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. x.
[150] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 103.

Village servants, or *āyagārs*, consisted of a number of functionaries of whom three are considered by Krishnaswami[151] and others not to have existed formerly. These included the headman (e.g. *maṇiyam reḍḍi*, or *gauḍa*), accountant (e.g. *karṇam*, *senābhova*), and watchman (e.g. *talaiyāri*). To holders of each of these offices, a portion of village income was allocated in the form of rights in particular plots of village land. These plots were not liable for regular tax payments, hence they were regarded as *mānya*, or tax free[152] though holders of such rights might be subject to a fixed quit-rent payment.[153] The same form of payment went to other 'village servants' who possessed no governance or management functions within a village, but did provide services essential to the village community. Among these might be providers of ritual services, such as washerman and priest. For the most part however, village servants were providers of goods and services of a more ordinary sort. Among the latter would be the leather-worker whose products included the leather bag used in lift irrigation devices (*mhote* or *kapila*), potter, blacksmith, carpenter, waterman (*nīraṇikkār*) who controlled and maintained irrigation channels, bankers and money-lenders. In the nineteenth century, these rights to income shares by 'village servants' were the subject of intensive debate and some clarification in connection with *mirāsi* and *inām* rights. During the Vijayanagara period such Persian words were not known or used; instead the Dravidian or Sanskrit terms *umbali*, *koḍage*, *srōtriya* are found. The meanings appear to be the same. They refer to rights of income from agricultural production which were exempt from the customary dues on agricultural income in lieu of direct payments for services. In those rare cases in which there were direct payments for services, payments in kind were usually designated, *dānyādāya*,[154] those in money, *suvarṇadāya* or *kāsu kaḍamai*.[155]

What is distinctive about the *āyagār system* is not that the complement of skills and services existed in villages of the Vijayanagara period, but that special allotments of income shares from

[151] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 104; Venkataramanayya, *Studies*, pp. 160-8.

[152] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 5, p. 3044.

[153] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 163.

[154] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xii.

[155] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, p. 199 and *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xxvi.

land and specified cash payments were for the first time generally provided to those holding these 'offices'. Village 'administrative' offices existed in villages of the Chola period as we know from some of the most elegant records of that time.[156] Similarly, there were carpenters, smiths, persons responsible for the regulation and maintenance of irrigation channels and village tanks providing services vital to the Chola agricultural economy just as there were priests and washermen required for ritual purity. However, livelihood shares of village income for these services are first mentioned in Vijayanagara records. It can only be assumed that payments for such services in pre-Vijayanagara times were provided informally by the *nattar* patrons of the village and locality to these specialist clients. Whether the transformation of such payments from informal, essentially, patron-client ones, to public provision of specified income shares resulted from the demand of village servants, whose bargaining position may have improved with the decline in power of the *nadu*, or the convenience of village patrons cannot be judged. The implications of either origin of the change are interesting, but the shift to this more formal, tenurial mode of payment underscores the transformation from the anonymous, organic agrarian relationships of the Chola period to the more stratified and complex relationships later.

Finally, there continued during the Vijayanagara period, as earlier, to be payments from agricultural communities to those who provided the highest order of ritual services. The form of such payments is again some share of village income in which the recipients may have been liable to a small, fixed cess (later called *jōdī*) but which could also have been exempt from all dues. These continued to be called *mānya* rights by and large and were held by Brahmans as individuals or as members of corporate bodies specified in terms like *brahmadēya*, *dēvadāya*, and *maṭhapura*.[157]

A distinctive category of Vijayanagara land tenures related to what might be called 'rural developmental entrepreneurship'. In Tamil country and Andhra, these tenures were called *daśavanda* rights; in Karnataka, they were called *kaṭṭu-koḍage* rights. These were special, private rights to a share of the new productivity

[156] The 'Larger Leiden Plates' of Rajendra I list such offices. *See E.I.*, v. 22, no.34, pp. 233, 237-8.

[157] Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the Third Dynasty*, pp. 180-4. The general term *umbali* was also used for payments to Brahmans.

created by an investment in irrigation improvement in existing agricultural villages.

*Amaranayaka*s were among the most active rural entrepreneurs. Perhaps these powerful men were seeking the maximum, protected return to their descendants on resources they commanded in many parts of the macro region; a kind of insurance against the vagaries of political fortune. In agrarian tracts where productivity could be increased by a relatively modest new construction of, or improvement in, irrigation facilities, there was scope for agrarian entrepreneurship or, as it might be termed, developmental activity. Such activity seems to have occurred less in the regions of reliable irrigation potential such as in the deltaic tracts of the Kistna-Godavari or Kaveri, where irrigation construction and maintenance were well-established locality or village functions with cesses and personnel provided from quite early times.[158] In tracts with little or no potential for this scale of water management, such as the dry upland tracts of Rayalaseema or Pudukkottai, there is also little evidence of this kind of activity; here, irrigation development had to await the large-scale works of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was rather in those places where hydrographic and topographic features were such as to provide the basis for considerable productivity and settlement, but provided still greater scope for development through investment in small-scale irrigation works that this feature of the Vijayanagara period is most evident.

'Developmental investment' was undertaken by individuals of means and local prominence in return for which they secured income rights to a portion of the enhanced productivity as personal, heritable, and transferable property. This is the meaning of the tenurial forms called *kaṭṭu-koḍage* in Karnataka and *daśabhandam* or *daśavanda* in Tamil country. Under these arrangements, it was usually stipulated that a share of increased product from the construction of a tank or channel was to go to the cultivators of the village in which the construction was carried out and a smaller share was to be granted to the person who financed or otherwise executed the construction.[159] The share to the latter appears often

[158] Chola terms such as *cen-nīr-veṭṭi*, refer to labour obligations for the purpose of dredging irrigation channels, and *nīr-vīlai*, to a water cess, are among the most frequently occurring terms found in the Kaveri basin according to Karashima and Sitaraman, op. cit., p. 91.

[159] Mahalingam, *Economic Life in Vijayanagar*, p. 52. Karnataka inscriptions

to have been about one-quarter. An inscription from Pelleru village, Atmakur taluk, Nellore, dated A.D. 1622, involves a village held on *amaram* tenure under the following specified arrangement:

> . . . the terms for providing channels for the people this year are: the produce raised on dry fields should be divided into four shares, of which three should go to the ryot and one to the estate every year. The grain raised under the tanks should be divided into three shares, of which two should go to the ryot and one to the estate every year. In this manner whoever is the ruler should cause to be done.[160]

An earlier record from Mulbagal taluk, Kolar district, Karnataka, a part of the Gangavadi territory, provides elaborate description of the *daśavanda* right. In A.D. 1496, a person constructed a tank in a temple (*devadana*) village under an arrangement with the head priest of the Narasimha temple. It was stipulated that the builder of the tank would be entitled to three-tenths of the produce from the rice land watered by the tank and, in addition to this, the builder was granted income shares in dry cultivation of ragi. From these shares, it was provided that the builder of the tank would be responsible for repairing and maintaining it under the penalty of being liable to a special payment to the temple should he fail to do so. It was moreover provided that if additional irrigation facilities were created in the village by this person, the same arrangement would apply, and that any groves of coconut or areca or any permanent gardens were planted, tank water could be utilized as on the rice lands. As a final provision, it was stated that irrigation water for the plots charged with meeting the *daśavanda* shares could only come after temple lands had been watered.[161]

Some large temples which held income shares in villages as

referring to *kaṭṭu kodage* grants may be found, among other places, in *E.C.*, v. 10, *Inscriptions in the Kolar District*, Kolar taluk, no.207, A.D. 1661; no.219, A.D. 1663; no.220, A.D. 1628; no.227, A.D. 1655 (?); Mulbagal taluk: no.131, A.D. 1407; no.132, A.D. 1494. An example of *daśavanda* in Andhra is the Telugu inscription from Kondamarripalli, Kalahasti taluk, Chittoor, dated A.D. 1592 in *Inscriptions of Andhradēsa*, ed. M. Rama Rao, v. 2, pt 1, Sri Venkateswara University Press, Tirupati, 1969, no.891, Chittoor District.

[160] Butterworth and Venugopal Chetty, *Nellore Inscriptions*, v. 1, p. 264. Also noted, *IMP*, v. 2, p. 1055. 'Estate' appears to be the translation of *amaramākāṇi*.

[161] *E.C.*, v. 10, Mulbagal, no.172. The next record, no.173, dated A.D. 1503 pertains to the same person and temple providing for the share-cropping of the temple lands which the former undertook on approximately half-shares.

dēvadāna maintained irrigation works departments for the precise purpose of utilizing money endowments for productive irrigation works. During the Vijayanagara period all temples received money gifts and some received large amounts. Donors of money were often designated as recipients of a share of the food offerings made to the god (*prasādam*) as a part of the *bhakti* temple ritual of the age. Entitlement to a share of *prasādam*, apart from being an important temple honour (*mariyādai*),[162] was materially valuable. *Prasādam* was sold, as it is to this day, by those who were entitled to receive it, to pilgrims to be carried back to their homes by the latter and shared with others in the same manner, and with the same auspicious effect, as Ganga water was and still is. The donor's share at the temple of Venkatēsvara, the premier temple of the later Vijayanagara period at Tirupati, was one-fourth of the food-stuffs resulting from a particular investment in a new irrigation facility in a temple village. A typical Tirupati inscription with this provision may be cited. The Tamil record is dated 1 October, A.D. 1536.[163]

> Hail, Prosperity! This is the silāsāsanam executed by the Sthānattār (trustees) of Tirumalai temple in favour of Kōnēri, son of Sellan residing at Paḷavēṛkāḍu village in the Saka year 1458 while Srīman Mahārājādhirāja Rājaparamēsvara Srī Vīrapratāpa Srī Vīra Achyutarāya Mahārāya was ruling the kingdom, to wit.
>
> Since you have paid the sum of 3,200 nar-paṇam into the temple treasury for the purpose of propitiating Srī Vēnkatēsa with 2 tiruppōnakam [food offerings] daily as your ubhaiyam [donation] — we shall utilize this sum of 3,200 paṇam for the improvement of the tanks and channels in the temple villages and with the income obtained thereby, shall be supplied from the temple-store for the preparation of 2 veḷḷai-tiruppōnakam, 2 marakkāl of rice, measured with the Tirumalai temple measure, 1 uḻakku of ghee, 1 uḻakku of green gram, salt, pepper, vegetables and curds.
>
> You are hereby authorized to receive the quarter share of the offered prasādam due to the donor. The remaining prasādam shall be reserved for distribution during early aḍaippu.

[162] The work in progress of Carol Breckenridge on the matter of temple honour is very important here; the author is indebted to her and to Arjun Appadurai on the point. See their joint paper, 'The South Indian Temple: Redistribution, Honors and Authority', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (New series: December, 1976).

[163] *Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series*/hereafter: *T.T.D.I.*, v. 4, *Inscriptions of Achyutaraya's Time (from 1530 A.D. to 1542 A.D.)*, Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam Press, Madurai, 1936, no.75, pp. 144-45.

This arrangement shall continue to be in force throughout the succession of your heirs, till the moon and the sun shine.

In this manner this deed is drawn up by the temple-accountant, Tiruninga-udaiyān with the consent of the Srīvaishṇavas. May these the Śrīvaishṇavas protect!

While this is a typical record of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century temple complex of the hill shrine at Tirumalai and the shrines at the base of the hill at Tirupati, this temple complex was not typical. It was perhaps the greatest temple in South India. Indeed, before it reached the peak of its fame in the sixteenth century, 153 festival days were celebrated there, accounting for its enormous attraction to pilgrims.[164] Still, other large temples maintained a system of productive investment of endowment funds in temple lands; and there were at the time few more secure ways for temples to meet the responsibilities they incurred in accepting funds for perpetual ritual services and there were equally few ways in which those persons of wealth, capable of making such endowments, could assure to themselves the prestige of temple honours and a reliable return on some portion of their wealth then could be realized through such things as the sale of *prasādam*.[165] Grants of income from land to temples by these and other donors had the further advantage of placing some portion of their land under temple protection, yet another form of insurance.

Inscriptions from the shrines at Tirupati and Tirumalai afford an unparalleled opportunity to take a measure of the complex variety of persons who commanded land and money.[166] About one thousand stone inscriptions ranging from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries have been published by the Devasthanam of that temple. Most of these date from the period A.D. 1450 to A.D. 1550, a time when this sacred complex enjoyed substantial patronage

[164] T.K.T. Viraraghavacharya, *History of Tirupati (The Tiruvengadam Temple)*, Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, 1954, v. 2, pp. 565-6.

[165] For a more elaborate description of these matters see: B. Stein, 'The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple', *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 19 (February, 1960), pp. 163-76 and B. Stein, 'The State, the Temple and Agricultural Development; A Study in Medieval South India', *The Economic Weekly Annual*, Bombay, February 1961, pp. 179-87.

[166] This discussion is based upon the author's unpublished doctoral thesis, entitled, 'The Tirupati Temple: An Economic Study of a Medieval South Indian Temple', University of Chicago, December, 1958. Published portions of this research may be found in Stein, 'The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple'.

from the rulers and officials of the Vijayanagara state. Between A.D. 1456 and 1570, over one hundred villages and large sums of money were granted to these shrines by some three hundred donors.

Concentrating upon the major part of the sixteenth century, the analysis of these Tirupati records provides important information on as well as raising questions about donorship and its increasingly diverse sources. These records are, therefore, essential evidence on social and economic complexity during the great days of the Vijayanagara state. Excluding the gifts to the temple from Vijayanagara royal families, the following breakdown of donors and endowments of temple villages during the sixteenth century by Vijayanagara regnal periods[167] and tenurial type and number of villages granted can be seen.

TABLE VIII-1

Village Endowments to the Tirupati Temple and Types of Tenure by Donor Groups, 1509-68[a]

Donor Group	Type of Tenure	1509-30	1530-42	1542-68	Total
A. State donors.	Crown and Service tenure.[b]	12	10	$40^1/_2$	$62^1/_2$
B. Temple Functionaries	Eleemosynary Tenure	5	$19^1/_2$	$18^1/_2$	43
C. Local Residents and Merchants.	Some service, some peasant proprietor tenure.	$^1/_2$	6	3	$9^1/_2$
	Total	$17^1/_2$	$35^1/_2$	62	115

[a] Based on 312 Tirupati inscriptions. Miscellaneous land grants are not included.

[b] Differentiation of villages which might have been under *bhandarvada* tenure from those under *amaram* tenure is not possible from the data. Theoretically, grantors of both types would have required the assent of superordinate authorities for such alienations, though there is no evidence that such assent was sought or actually necessary.

For this same period, using the same broad classification of donors, money endowments entrusted to the *stānattār* of the various shrines at Tirupati and Tirumalai were as follows:

[167] The period A.D. 1509-30, Krishnadevaraya; A.D. 1530-42, Achyutadevaraya; A.D. 1542-68, Sadasivaraya.

TABLE VIII-2

Monetary Endowments to the Tirupati Temple, 1509-68

Donors	1509-30		1530-42		1542-68	
	Value (*paṇam*)	% of Total	Value (*paṇam*)	% of Total	Value (*paṇam*)	% of Total
A. STATE DONORS		33.0		65.0		20.5
Viceroy			30,675	6.5		
Chief Minister	1,200	1.0				
Commander-in-Chief			15,000	3.0		
Generals	18.980	12.0	145,200	30.5	4,260	2.5
Royal Officers	19,990	13.0	11,010	2.0	1,580	1.0
Subordinate and Tributary Officers	11,320	7.0	106,820	23.0	32,840	17.0
B. TEMPLE FUNCTIONARIES		26.0		24.0		23.5
Temple Priests	28,215	18.0	66,963	15.0	22,482	12.0
Musicians, poets dancers	2,500	1.5	30,480	6.0	6,340	4.0
Scholars	2,520	1.5	4,185	1.0	5,747	3.0
Temple Accountants	7,446	5.0	8,270	2.0	7,802	4.5
C. LOCAL RESIDENTS AND MERCHANTS		41.0		11.0		56.0
Citizens and Merchants of Tirupati	25,625	23.0	41,695	9.0	54,405	28.0
Private Devotees	27,560	18.0	10,293	2.0	54,150	28.0
Totals	145,356	100.0 100.0	470,591	100.0 100.0	189,606	100.0 100.0

The pattern of donorship displayed in these two tables may appear unexceptionable in all but one respect, that is the conspicuous place of donors identified as temple priests and other devout persons who resided around the precincts of the Tirupati/Tirumalai temples. The fact that a variety of important political personages — some closely linked to the Rayas as officials and many other men of seemingly independent prominence and power — contributed substantially to the land and monetary resources of the shrines is, of course, unsurprising. These were, after all, precisely

the persons with control over the distribution of village income and changes in that distribution as well as those with the dharmic responsibility to use their resources in this way. Somewhat more interesting is the donative contribution of local residents and merchants of the locality of Tirupati. The money endowments of these people during the troubled reign of Sadāsivaraya, A.D. 1542-68, constituted over one half of all of the money given in that quarter century.

However, as noted above, it is the substantial level of money and village endowments by religious leaders that must be considered as most interesting. Almost forty per cent of all of the villages granted to the temple and about twenty-five per cent of money endowments came from those with religious titles and, as may be judged from the inscriptions of the temple, important ritual functions. This is a paradox which is scarcely dissolved by the observation that many, probably even most, villages were originally granted to these religious personages by the category of donors labelled 'state donors', for it is not certain what is to be understood by this complication in gifting. What were the advantages of or the needs for the political donor (a chief or military official), or the priestly or otherwise religiously marked donor (temple priest or *maṭhādipati*), or the temple managers, possessing a village or some money, to pass through the middle group of high ritual functionaries or heads of *mathas* on the way from the original donor to the temple?

This question will be reconsidered below, in the section on 'temple and sect'; it will be sufficient here merely to assert that the various kinds of religious leaders associated with this temple, and perhaps with all large and important temples, are not to be seen simply as 'temple functionaries', 'employees', as it were, of the temple. Rather, the various categories of religious personages — such as *jīyars* or *matha* heads, *achāryapurūshas* or learned and often itinerant propagandists of Vaishnavism; *ēkāki* Śrī Vaishnavas or celebate priests; and even temple accountants — may be seen as important religious personalities in their own right. Such persons would have followers in the countryside and in towns who provided their leaders with the resources necessary to have an important presence at such temples.[168] These religious leaders

[168] I again express my gratitude to two scholars whose work on this matter has persuaded me: Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai. Their work will be considered more fully below.

may thus be viewed as personages whose religious roles conferred command over substantial and redistributable resources; considering the evidence of the sixteenth century Tirupati, they were not very different from the great political notables of the time. Such sectarian and temple leaders may be viewed as conduits for resources marshalled from quite diverse social sources and ultimately used in great temples to protect and augment sectarian interests in ways that other entrepreneurial agents did; this deployment of resources in temples also brought honours for the constituencies served by these leaders. Thus, taking the categories of donors as shown in Table VIII-2 and adding to that diverse set of resource holders and redistributors those who anonymously provided villages and money to their sectarian leaders for the support of the latter and the redeployment of these resources as temple gifts — considering all of these appropriate holders and conveyors of wealth — the fabric of Vijayanagara society can be seen to have become far more complex than what we are permitted to see during the Chola period.

Most, but not all, of the evidence which exists on the entrepreneurial and redistributive activities outlined above were related to temples. This is the nature of the evidence in almost all parts of the macro region. Karnataka offers something of an exception to the general bias toward temple records. Numerous *kaṭṭu koḍage* rights are recorded on slabs of stone which could be placed anywhere whereas Tamil inscriptions, almost inevitably, are inscribed on the basements and walls of temple structures.[169] In whatever way these rights of the Vijayanagara period came to be preserved, however, the purpose was to protect the entrepreneurial beneficiary as well as to confer public recognition upon that activity and the more generalized redistributive system of which it was part.

These entrepreneurial and redistributional processes must be fitted to extensive spatial networks in which centres, such as the sacred complex at Tirupati, played a vital role. Notwithstanding these complex systems of resource movements, agrarian management remained in the hands of locally based men. Like the *nattars* of the Chola period, the chiefs and *nayaka*s of the Vijayanagara period were men of the locality, except, rarely, when they can be identified as among the great Telugu *nayaka* commanders of

[169] *E.C.*, v. 10, *Kolar*, 'Introduction', p. xxiii.

Vijayanagara armies. The title, '*nayaka*' appears to have been freely adopted and widely used by local magnates with no apparent connection with Vijayanagara armies. This title signified an altered form of local leadership which emphasized the greater scope for individual achievement than can be observed in the evidence of the Chola state and time. During the Chola period, and especially in the more advanced, populous agrarian tracts, there is a pervasive anonymity of leadership; it is the *nattar*s acting as a corporate body — the *nadu* — at times with the assent of those local powerful persons with the *mūvēndavēḷār* title. In the Vijayanagara period, it is as powerful individuals that we encounter local leadership. The basis of local authority remained the same: the dominant local peasantry. Military prowess and economic power were the sources of local rural leadership in both periods, but the *nayaka*s of the Vijayanagara period managed more complex social and economic universes. While this change in leadership can be noted in parts of the Tamil country as early as the twelfth century, it is a common feature of the Vijayanagara period. Greater power and prestige attached to this later form of leadership reflecting the greater demands upon individual leaders as corporate organization of the earlier Chola age broke down. The scope for and rewards to individual capability in the Vijayanagara period is sharply contrastive with the Chola age.

Two essential points emerge from this recital of Vijayanagara tenurial rights. First, land rights do not pertain to dominion in land, but to 'property' in share of income. Secondly, land continued to be managed by the dominant agricultural groups of a locality. The Vijayangara land system, whether it is discussed in terms of *amaranayaka*s or otherwise, is precisely about these two points; so are the major systems of village organization described in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British records. It is appropriate to consider this latter, relatively full body of documentation as a means of clarifying Vijayanagara arrangements.

The earliest direct experience of the English East India Company servants with land management in South India came in what was called, 'the Jaghire', the rural hinterland of Fort St. George, destined to become the city of Madras. This territory of 231 villages, 330 square miles, and a land revenue valued at Rs 250,000 (two and one-half lakhs) was acquired as a *jagīr* from the Nawab of Arcot in September 1750 and was confirmed as an *inām* or tax free

gift in an order (*sanad*) of the Mughal emperor in August 1765.[170] The report of the East India Company official, Lionel Place, on this tract in 1799 was the first to present that system of land rights to become known as 'mirasi system'. The following late nineteenth century summary of Place's description of the system of 'the Jaghire' is both accurate and interesting in its appreciation of that system:

> The Jaghire was placed in 1794 in the hands of Mr. Lionel Place, and it was from this gentleman that we are indebted for the first correct information as to landed tenures in South India. The villages of the Jaghire were discovered to be of a class already [i.e., previously] described as democratic or mirasi. The villages, that is to say, were corporate bodies, with an internal municipal constitution, and with the land the property of the corporation. The land was sub-divided into shares which were saleable, and still retained all the value of real property. In each village there were besides the corporate members, cultivators holding as tenants of the corporation and having on their side prescriptive rights according to ancient agreements. Again there was a third class cultivating from year to year without any other privileges than that of doing so. The distinction between the shareholders and the tenants consisted in the fact that the latter could not sell his rights of occupancy, nor enjoy any of the various immunities and advantages belonging to the former as a member of the corporation. Mr. Place in making his settlements, dealt with the whole communities and not with any particular individual, and left it to the villagers to assess themselves individually. Each village chose its representative or representatives. There is every reason to suppose that the joint village settlements of Mr. Place would have proved successful.[171]

According to Place's report of 1799, the village lands of 'the Jaghire' were apportioned among 8,387 'meerassee' holders in

[170] *The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company, 28 July, 1812*, ed. Walter Kelly Firminger, Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1969; originally published Calcutta, 1918, v. 3, p. xxi. Hereafter: *The Fifth Report*.

[171] C.D. Maclean, *Standing Information Regarding the Official Administration of the Madras Presidency in Each Department, in Illustration of the Yearly Administration Reports Prepared Under the Orders of Government*, Madras, 1877; 'Section II, Administration of the Land, Government and Alienated Land; (a) Historical Sketch', pp. 94-5. The reference in the quotation to villages 'already described as democratic. . . .' is to the first important work subsequent to that of Place on this form of tenure, namely, F.W. Ellis, *Replies to Seventeen Questions Proposed by the Government of Fort St. George Relative to Mirasi Right; with Two Appendices* (Madras, 1818) and, perhaps, the later work critical of that of Ellis, W.H. Bayley, *Memorandum on 'Mīrāsī Tenure'*, London, 1856.

possession of 15,995 shares of income with another 1,827 shares either unclaimed or held appropriately by tenants ('pyacarries'), or a total of 17,822 shares.[172] At almost the same time that Place was reporting on the mirasi system of 'the Jaghire', other territories were being added to the Company's holdings in South India, including Cuddapah which was acquired from the Nizam of Hyderabad as part of the Ceded Districts to defray some of the costs of maintaining a British force as provided under the subsidiary alliance treaty between the Company and Nizam. *Vīsabaḍi* was the name given to the system of village revenue encountered by Thomas Munro, the first Company administrator in Cuddapah. This term is a combination of a Dravidian word for the fraction 'one-sixteenth' (e.g. Tamil: *vīsam*) and the Hindustani suffix '*baṭ*', share or division;[173] it applies to coparcenery villages found not only in Cuddapah, but in much of Telingana comprising Hyderabad State and modern Cuddapah, Anantapur, Bellary, and Kurnool districts. According to an early nineteenth century Madras Board of Revenue statement,

> Under this [*vīsabaḍi*] system, a fixed sum of money was assessed on the whole of the village for one or more years. A certain number of the most respectable ryots became answerable for this amount, each being responsible for his own separate portion thereof, and all for each other, and the lands were divided by lot, as in the samudayam villages of the Tamil country [a form of mirasi tenure in which lands are held in common but subject to periodic redistribution[174]] the portion of land to be occupied by each being determined by the proportion of the rent for which he became responsible . . . and from this division of the lands into shares the settlement took its name of *veesabuddy*, namely a village settlement by *shares* of ready money.[175]

During the vigorous, and at times acrimonious, debates in Madras between 1795 and 1817 over the kind of land revenue system which was to prevail in the Presidency, village systems of the sort described above were given serious study, and, for a time at least

[172] *The Fifth Report*, v. 3, app. no.16; 'Extracts from Report of Mr. Place, Respecting the Land Tenures in the Jaghire; dated 6th June 1799', p. 165. Fractions in the original have been deleted.

[173] H.H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, Eastern Law House, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 67, 549.

[174] Ibid., p. 459.

[175] *Cited in* S. Sundararaja Iyengar, *Land Tenures in the Madras Presidency (Students' Edition)*, Madras, 1933, pp. 81-2.

— between 1807 and 1812 — seemed destined to become 'the Madras system'. This, of course, was in contrast to, and to some extent in conflict with, the zamindari settlement of Bengal. Village settlements under a variety of names were pressed by the revenue officials;

> the officers of government farmed out the lands of whole villages either to the head inhabitants, who again sub-rented each field and settled with each ryot, or the community of the village who settled among themselves the land and rent which they were respectively to occupy and pay. The apportioning of rent and land was known as *amarakam*.[176]

In 1808, the Madras Board of Revenue pronounced itself in favour of this form of revenue system over that in force in Bengal or that being proposed by Munro as the 'ryotwar' or 'kulwar' systems, which were to triumph in the end.[177]

Recent study of the early phase of the ryotwar settlement in Madras lends strong support to the wisdom of the Madras Board of Revenue in insisting that the village settlement system was the arrangement most closely attuned to the agrarian order they sought to control in the early nineteenth century. Mukherjee and Frykenberg lay particular stress upon this point.

> . . .immediately prior to the introduction of Company rule, the prevailing mode of land control was the village system. In this tradition, each individual had been obliged to submerge his own identity and to sacrifice his own interests for the common weal of the village, as determined by the lord, the élite of the village. Village affairs were controlled by persons whose titles, by local custom, might be any of the following: *pedda raiyat, reddi, kapu, dora, patel, kadim, mirasidar, gramatamu;* often the adjective *pedda*, or 'great' was prefixed thereto. These persons were the headmen, the élite of their villages. Invariably, they were of high and clean caste, either Brahmans or, more often, 'yeoman-warriors'. They stood between the Government and the rest of the village which was composed mostly of labouring people of lower caste.[178]

[176] Ibid., p. 83.

[177] Maclean, *Standing Information*, p. 101.

[178] Nilmani Mukherjee and Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'The Ryotwari System and Social Organization in the Madras Presidency', in *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1969, pp. 219-20. There is in this quotation and elsewhere in this thoughtful essay a somewhat excessive appreciation of the harmonious village life of the time.

Those whom Mukherjee and Frykenberg call the 'yeoman-warrior' or, elsewhere, 'farmer-warrior castes'[179] accurately reflects the language of early British administrators faced with the task of establishing Company rule. The experience of the earliest administrators was essentially military, and the formal campaigns against the well-organized field forces of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan and the Marathas were probably less influential on the views held by these soldier-administrators than the bitter, little battles with 'poligars' and other local magnates whose forces consisted of peasant peoples fighting on and defending their own lands and rights. The liquidation of these rural warriors was strenuous and effective, and their fate was often a brutal one.

> In the southern part of Tamil country there were thirty-three Poligars, for the realization of whose tribute it was found necessary to appoint a separate European Collector. These Poligars fought desperately for what they conceived to be their rights, and their reduction forms a noteworthy incident in the military history of the Presidency. Of those chiefs who held their patrimonial estates for several generations, we find in the year 1803 thirteen only still in possession; the lands of fourteen others were under charge of the European Collector, and six were forfeited, given away or sold. In the districts ceded by the Nizam in 1800, there were eighty Poligars. These also resisted the Government, and had to be reduced to subjection by force of arms. In 1807 they were found to have been thus disposed of: Pensioned 2, holding a Jaghire 1, residing on their estates deprived of authority 23, managing their own estates 40, expelled by force 6, in confinement 8, total 80.[180]

British soldier-administrators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries coped with the powerful combination of peasant-warrior, village leaders by persuasion and coercion. The most successful, like Munro, developed a lively appreciation for the capacity of the 'yeoman-warrior' to resist the imposition of Company rule as well as their capacity to facilitate Company rule. Once again, the findings of Mukherjee and Frykenberg are important:

> Evidence of the continuous and subtle influence of village leaders abounded [in the later nineteenth century]. In 1882, the Head Assistant Collector at Cuddapah reported that ryots still stood in respect and scrupulously obeyed the 'Chiefs' or Pedda Reddis. The Pedda Reddi was the only person in each locality who had effective control over ryots.

[179] Loc. cit.

[180] Maclean, *Standing Information*, p. 96.

> The only peace and stability of the area depended upon him. The Reddi had only to express dissatisfaction at his own individual revenue settlement and most other ryots (usually also of the same caste) would follow his example, even if they stood to lose by doing so. Whenever any difficulty arose in coming to an agreement, as in making an annual revenue settlement (*jamabandi*) with village ryots, if the cause [of the difficulty] could be discovered — and often it could not be — it would be found that the Reddi was responsible. As soon as he was satisfied, troubles would cease. Ryotwari settlements, village settlements, or whatever, his influence persisted. A 'good' (or cooperative) Reddi could be an asset to the Government; a 'bad' one could be its bane. It was reported that persuasion by the whole staff of the *huzur kachahri*, or collector's office, could not do in two days what a Reddi could do in half an hour.[181]

It is of little wonder, as these authors point out, that revenue officials of the Madras government were, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as suspicious of peasant, village leaders, as they were to become of their Brahman revenue servants during the middle and late parts of the century.[182]

In only one matter were the early British administrators wrong with respect to the village leadership with which they had to deal. That is, they believed that the 'farmer-warrior castes' exercising village dominance were created by the chaos of the eighteenth century or by the oppression of Muslim rule. The British believed, or in any case expressed the idea, that Muslim policies and the oppression and chaos engendered by them justified the revenue and judicial policies promulgated by the Company. In this, the British administrators and Court of Directors in London were like most of the historians of Vijayanagara who consider that the early Muslim incursions from the fourteenth century onwards explain and justify Vijayanagara policies. The armed and powerful village leadership of the late eighteenth century is more truely the vestige of the *amaranayaka* system of the Vijayanagar period in the particular form encountered by the British. Perhaps more truely, this kind of local leadership dates from decline of ethnic territoriality and the *nadu* in the late Chola period.

Temple and Sect

The concluding section of this chapter deals with a variety of

[181] Mukherjee and Frykenberg, op. cit., pp. 222-3.
[182] Ibid., p. 221.

issues only poorly apprehended by its title. The intention is not to discuss 'religion' in the period from 1350 to 1700, though that is a part of its subject matter; it is rather to focus attention on the medieval South Indian temple and the relationships between it and various kinds of social and cultural features of that society. The temple is viewed in relation to absolute and enduring religious corporate groups such as the Teṅgalai Sri Vaishnava *saṁpradāya* as well as in relation to those relative and potential groupings to which such terms as *kaṭṭaḷaidār* (temple donor) and *idangai-valangai* (left and right caste divisions) are applied. More abstractly, the temple is viewed in relation to morality, that is, in relation to those conceptions about how competing and conflicting claims among persons and groups ought to be resolved. As in other sections of this chapter, the purpose is less to summarize historical interpretations on which there is wide agreement than to suggest processes and relationships of which we are presently less aware.

Underlying the conceptions which are presented here are a set of tensions which emerge from the preceeding discussion of the political system and resources of the Vijayanagara period and which repeatedly called for moral adjudication. The sources of these tensions in the society of the Vijayanagara period should be made explicit.

The *nayankara* system generated profound tensions for the society of later medieval South India. It was an intermediary level of authority and power which was uncertainly poised between two very different levels of established authority: that of a macro regional kingship, at one level, and that of atomistic, micro regional peasant societies, at another level. Because the South Indian political system lacked the relatively firm principle of ruling clanship of Kshatriya ideology and because it never developed a contractual basis similar to European feudalism, the *nayaka* system was oriented, Janus-like, both upward to the Rayas and downward to thousands of peasant localities.

Vijayanagara *nayaka*s were creatures of the State, created by the military superiority and purposes of the Rayas, and therefore, necessarily, involved in and vulnerable to the hazardous imperial politics of this militaristic state. Notwithstanding several kinds of divergent interests, *nayaka*s and Rayas shared one fundamental interest: that of preventing new regional kingships from coming into existence. When this threatened, *nayaka*s and Rayas together

could and did cooperate in repressing such incipient states. But, apart from this shared interest, there was little that clove the great *nayaka*s — or the many, minor chiefs who assumed the title — to the Rayas, and there was much that divided them from these kings. To Telugu *nayaka*s bent upon maintaining their often delicately poised control over peoples and territories in which they were outsiders, the prospect of an invasion by a Vijayanagara army — as reportedly under Krishnadevaraya in the early sixteenth century and more certainly under Sriranga III in the middle of the seventeenth century[183] — and their possible displacement was an all too real threat. The same threat was equally before Tamil chiefs as known from a number of Mackenzie documents.[184] Contrarily, the Rayas could justly fear the combination of *nayaka*s which would thwart an even strong Raya's ambition, but, more seriously, could lead to the seizure of dynastic control. This occurred when Saluva Narasimha, in the late fifteenth century, brought an end to the first dynasty of Vijayanagara. Less focused combinations of the great *nayaka*s could also constitute an alternative locus of Vijayanagara authority which brought about the civil wars of the early seventeenth century.

The policy of relying upon Brahmans as instruments of imperial control, especially during the time of Krishnadevaraya, as we have it from the *Amuktamalyada* and inscriptional evidence, appears to have been successful under a king of his power and ability. But, this proved a weak and unenduring solution to potential cleavages in the political structure. The career and rebellion of Sellappa make this clear.

Sellappa Saluva Nayaka was a Brahman officer whose father had served the deity Ekambaranatha at Kanchi. Sellappa rose to political prominence under Krishnadevaraya, and he appeared to have served that king's interests in Ramnad. At Tiruppattur there are two inscriptions of A.D. 1510, extolling the virtues of this Brahman officer and recording endowments by him of two villages — renamed in his honour as 'Sellappapuram' — to a Siva temple.[185]

[183] Krishnaswami, op. cit., pp. 193-4 and Ch. 15.

[184] E.g., 'Account of Kandava Rāyan and Sētu Rāyan Who Ruled from the Fort of Tiruviḍaiccuram in the Arcot District', *Mackenzie Manuscripts; Summaries of the Historical Manuscripts in the Mackenzie Collection*, v. 1 (Tamil and Malayalam), T.V. Mahalingam (ed.), University of Madras, Madras, 1972, p. 94.

[185] Krishnaswami, op. cit., p. 200.

Other honours were added in the remaining years of Krishnaraya's reign as he continued to hold high office along with other Brahman notables[186] in the far southern part of the peninsula; often Sellappa's inscriptions fail to even mention the King, though his loyal relationship with Krishnaraya continued. Moreover, Sellappa appears to have supported the troubled candidacy of Achyutadevaraya. However, early in the latter's reign — one day after his coronation according to the contemporary Sanskrit work, *Achyutarayabhudayam* of Raianatha Dindans[187] — Sellappa joined the Travancore king Udayamartandavarman, or Tiruvada (possibly entering a marriage alliance with that king), who had come to control a substantial part of the southern end of the peninsula by A.D. 1530. Achyutadevaraya reacted vigorously against their combination and used the occasion for a triumphal progress of the southern country, conferring gifts at Tirupati, Kalahasti, Tiruvannamalai and Srirangam.[188] No very convincing explanations of Sellappa's rebellion have come forward and none may be necessary to explain the behaviour of this able man apart from noticing that the times offered numerous other examples of self-interested, powerful men pursuing their ambitions. Against such machinations there was certain protection for neither Rayas nor *nayaka*s, thus the frequent political chaos of the Vijayanagara empire that marks the strategy of political self-preservation, of all against all.

Uncertain relationships between these great *nayaka*s and the Rayas was replicated downward from the *nayaka*s. In Tamil country many of the most powerful *nayaka*s were outsiders — Telugus — who had won their locality control through the threat of their superior military power based upon technical advantages and in part on the following they held among their own peoples whose migration had preceded their control or accompanied it. All such migrants were outsiders like the *nayaka*s. There were also a variety of local peasant allies offering collaboration with the

[186] E.g., a prominent poet in Krishnaraya's court, Allasani Peddana was granted *nayankara* powers at Annur in Karirachi-Sima in modern South Arcot (*A.R.E.*, 1916, para. 66, p. 143).

[187] S. Krishnaswami Iyengar, *Sources of Vijayanagar History*, no.53, pp. 158-9, cantos 4-6.

[188] Ibid., canto 5 and V.N. Hari Rao, 'A History of Trichinopoly and Srirangam', unpublished Ph. D Thesis, University of Madras, 1945; typescript consulted at the University of Chicago Library.

*nayaka*s. Among such were those who perceived new opportunities to alter their long-standing political relationships with the ancient *nattar* to whom they had long been subservient. The rise of the Pallis during the sixteenth century in modern South Arcot and in Kongu is an example of this, so are the alliances between the Madurai *nayaka*s and the Maravars. Equally, if not more important, were the relations forged between intruding Telugu warriors and a variety of sectarian leaders in Tamil country, a relationship which will be examined more fully below.

By these means, Tamil country became a region of great opportunity for military adventure and imperial expansion during the fifteenth century and earlier. But, the establishment of *nayaka* authority there was made possible by yet another factor: the prior reduction of various institutions of local organization dating from the Chola period. This was a precondition of *nayaka* rule in Tamil country; it was not, as Krishnaswami and others have argued, a consequence of *nayaka* rule. Under the *nayaka*s, no new political forms of institutions were established in place of the *nadu* and *periyanadu*, the *sabha*s of *brahmadeya*s, or the *nagaram*s of merchants. The locality political superstructure having previously been weakened, and in some places eliminated, there existed a vacuum which provided the opportunity for the installation of *nayaka* rule. Nor were political institutions linking *nayaka*s and their peasant subjects replaced by other political or administrative institutions. Hence, the absence of effective linkages between the supralocal, intermediary authority of *nayaka*s and the peasant peoples from whom they exacted tribute can be seen to have been as great as the absence of reliable linkages between the *nayaka*s and the Rayas.

At the base of these political tensions were changes in the institutional and moral order whose origins date from transformations of the twelfth century. What the Tamil historians Nilakanta Sastri and Krishnaswami lament as the decay of the ancient self-governing institutions under Vijayanagara (or more properly, *nayaka*) rule, and which they justify as a necessary cost of protecting South Indian Hinduism and *varnāśrama-dharma*, is better seen as internally generated change in the peasant society of South India in later Chola times. The transformation of some part of the *nadu* leadership into chiefs over increasingly pluralistic local societies, the emergence of temple urban centres, the enhanced

importance of mercantile and artisan groups with whom the *periyanadu* chiefs forged new and strong relations, the increased monetization of the economy, all these were responsible for the decay of the local institutions of Chola times and indeed the Chola state itself.

The process continued into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with the focus of local management of productive resources collapsing more and more around villages controlled by segments or lineages of peasant clans of a locality. Dominant, local agricultural groups were thus less and less coherently linked together by ethnically defined political institutions such as the *nadu* and *periyanadu*, and increasingly by complex cultural and symbolic relationships to wider networks of allegiance and identity. This is seen in a genre of poetry celebrating Tamil peasant groups and in the crucial role played by temples and sects.

Occasional references have been made in this study to a little-recognized Tamil verse tradition extolling the qualities of peasant folk and the territories in which they lived. The poetic genre is a *śatakam* form, and the territory is the *mandalam*.[189] The *mandalam* term has a history among Tamils which is very ancient. References to it occur in the poetry of the Classical period,[190] and these territories are again referred to in the Saiva doctrinal work *Tirumandiram* of Tirumular of about the sixth century.[191]

In one stanza of that work, the *mandalam* is given a strong moral signature:

> The five Tamil Maṇḍala are Tatvas (i.e., are regions where the truth has been fully revealed); there roam wise men whose minds have blossomed. . . and who have known the ancient truths. . . . They have given utterance to their knowledge as easily as they would throw out water through their mouths and this knowledge spread over the whole of the five Tamil maṇḍalas.[192]

The commentary on the *Tirumandiram* takes the five *mandalams* to be: Cholamandalam, Cheramandalam, Pandyamandalam, Ton-

[189] An essay involving these elements by the author, entitled 'Circulation and Historical Geography in Tamil Country', *Journal of Asian Studies*, v. 37 (November, 1977), pp. 7-27.

[190] Subrahmanian, *Sangam Polity*, pp. 224-6.

[191] C.V. Narayana Ayyar [Swami Sadananda], *Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*, University of Madras, Madras, 1936, p. 211.

[192] Ibid., pp. 216-17.

daimandalam, and Kongumandalam.[193] *Mandalam*s are also used during the Chola period to designate the several large territories comprising the Tamil portions of the Chola state of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

However, the *śatakam*s referred to her differ from older forms of literature which only rarely refer to *mandalam*s and never to their peasant inhabitants. Several of these works survive, each set in a pattern of one hundred verses. They exist for all parts of Tamil country,[194] as well as for southern Karnataka.[195] To these may be added a *purāṇa* of the territory in modern South Arcot between Chola country and the central Tamil plain (or Tondai-mandalam) which celebrates the dominant Vanniyars, but is presented as an explanation of the right-and left-hand castes.[196] These works date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the most part. In a number of ways, these *śatakam* afford a striking example of ethnic pride in and identification with their territory by powerful peasant peoples.

In almost all cases, the *śatakam* extoll the virtues or moral superiority of peasant peoples whose society was the core of the contemporary social order upon whom all others depended. They are called Vellalas in most cases.[197] The *Cholamandala-Śatakam* refers to the banner of the Choliyar which displays the ploughshare (*mēḻi*)[198] and recalls with pride the support which the ancient Choliyar gave to the late twelfth century poet Kamban ('Kamba') who produced the poem *Erelupadu*, a hymn to the plough and to the Vellalas.[199] Echoing Kamban's appreciation of the agriculturist,

[193] Ibid., p. 218.

[194] The style of the *śatakam* (Sanskrit = *śataka*, a poetic form of 100 verses: *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 1254) is *kaṭṭaḷaikkalitturai* according to Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 25, this being a verse of four lines, each with sixteen syllables (*Tamil Lexicon*, p. 647). The *śatakams* are: *pāṇḍimaṇḍala-śatakam (P.S.)* by Aiyain Perumal Asiriyar of Madurai (Sirkali, 1932); *cōḷamaṇḍala-śatakam (C.S.)* by Atmanathar Desikar of Velur (1650-1728), ed. Somasundaradesikar (Mayunar, 1916); *toṇḍaimaṇḍala-śatakam (T.S.)* by the Jaina Brahman Jinendran or Karmeghakavinar of Vijayamangalam, ed. T.A. Muthuswami Konar (Trichengodu, 1923,), cited in Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, p. 25.

[195] *Kārmaṇḍala-śatakam* by Araikilar of Avanasi *(K.S)* commentary by P.A. Muthuthanadavaraya Pillay (Madras, 1930).

[196] *Iḍaṅgai-valaṅgai purāṇam*, Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, no. D. 2793, palm leaf.

[197] E.g., *P.S.*, v. 17 and *C.S.*, v. 27; *C.S.*, v. 38; *K.S.*, v. 20-1, 23; *T.S.*, v. 84, 98.

[198] *C.S.*, v. 38 and *T.S.*, v. 98.

[199] *C.S.*, v. 78; Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, pp. 672.

the *śatakam*s make claims for the peasantry as people of respectable status whose wealth was lavished upon Brahmans and canonical gods and who were 'pure', *sātsūdra*s (Tamil=*caṟcūttiraṉ*): 'Cholamandalam is famous for its Chōḷiyār who were the *sātsūdra*s sprouted forth from the feet of Brahma and who gave the produce their ploughs to all humanity.'[200]

In proof of their pretentions to 'purity', those honoured in the *śatakam*s refer to most of the sacred places in their territory and the gods sheltered and worshipped there;[201] they also claim to have founded temples and *matha*s.[202] References are made to Manu whose ordinances these peasants claim to uphold.[203]

A prominent theme of the *śatakam*s is the political importance of the peasantry. The *Pandimandala-Śatakam* states: 'The *vēḷāḷar* of this *maṇḍala*, give horses, elephants and chariots to the Pāṇḍya kings and put the crown on their heads;'[204] while in the *Cholamandala-Śatakam*: 'The Chōḷiyār of this maṇḍalam had the rights of *sthānika*s [temple managers] and *kāṇi* [land holding] and the privilege of staying near the king. . .[205] The sixty-four *kuḍis* [lineages of Chōḷiyar] had the right of crowning the Chōḷa king Karakāla.'[206]

The *Karmandala-Śatakam* refers to the 'three Tamil kings'[207] whom those of the territory had served in their territory along with rulers from northern Karnataka.[208] However, the Karalar deny that any king ever subjugated them. Rather, kings like Rajaraja the Great were accepted as the king of the Karalar because of his ardent devotion for the god Siva, and Rajendra I, whose title, the verse points out, was *gaṅgaikoṇḍān* ('conqueror of the Ganga country') not *gaṅgaṅkoṇḍān* ('conqueror of the Ganga people')

[200] *C.S.*, v. 6. In *T.S.*, v. 97, the title *cūttirar* is claimed (*Tamil Lexicon*, pp. 1342, 1561).

[201] *C.S.*, v. 50, 78; *K.S.*, v. 26-6, 31, 40-4, 49-50, 60, 80; *Y.S.*, v. 84, 99.

[202] *K.S.*, v. 60.

[203] *C.S.*, v. 29; *T.S.*, v. 56.

[204] V. 17.

[205] V. 57.

[206] V. 61; see *kuṭi*, among the meanings of which is 'family' or 'lineage' (*Tamil Lexicon*, p. 968).

[207] V. 27.

[208] V. 28. Karnataka inscriptions occasionally use another word for *mandalam*, namely, *pāni* as in a Tamil record of A.D. 1098 (*E.C.*, v. 10, pt 1, no.426 Mulbagal Taluk, pp. 80-2).

by which name those of Karmandalam were also known.[209] Karalars were friends of the great Bana chiefs and served them, as well as greater kings.[210]

The *śatakam*s have had little importance for historians because they seldom contain evidence which would be of interest to those concerned with conventional political history. Apart from their use in historical geography[211] these poetic works have been dismissed as merely the expressions of a part of the peasantry of the macro region — Vellalas — who shared a common northern origin myth.[212]

The generic terms *kārkātta-vēḷālar* or 'Ganga-people' refer to a primary mythic origin in the Gangetic plain and a secondary one in southern Karnataka — Gangavadi or Karmandalam. From here, the verses state, these Ganga people or *kārkātta-vēḷālar*, spread over the entire macro region.[21] Pandimandalam was settled by these folk after they had resided in Chola country according to *śatakam*s of both Pandimandalam and Cholamandalam.[214] Tondaimandalam was also settled by folk of the Chola country according to the *śatakam* of Tondaimandalam and other, somewhat later, traditions.[215] Conquest is neither claimed in these verse collections nor supported by them. There is no suggestion that the Tamil plain was, at some time, overrun by more northern peoples. On the contrary, even the Karalar, of what is now the southern portion of Karnataka, claim to be devoted to the protection and preservation of their Tamil language.[216] Their boasted primacy seems clearly to have arisen from close association with kings and great chiefs and from their purity in ritual terms.

The *śatakam*s provide an important, poetic insight into the broadly shared ideology of the leading stratum of peasants in the

[209] V. 28. Also see v. 32 where it is stated that *kārālar* are the progeny of *gaṅgadattan* or *gaṅgeyan* who was born near the river Ganga, hence they are known as *gaṅgan*.

[210] *K.S.*, v. 88.

[211] *See* Arokiaswami, *Kongu Country*, pp. 6, 13, *passim*.

[212] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, p. 690, no.25; 'All *veḷḷalas* are described as being of the Gangi-kula'.

[213] See *T.S.*, v. 97; *C.S.*, v. 98; *P.S.*, v. 11; *K.S.*, v. 31-2.

[214] *P.S.*, v. 5; *C.S.*, v. 92.

[215] *T.S.*, v. 97. Also, Mahalingam, *Mackenzie Manuscripts* 'Account of Kandava Rāyan and Sētu Rāyan who Ruled from the Fort at Tiruvaḍaiccuram in the Arcot District', p. 94. However, the *P.S.*, v. 9 and 10 claim that Vellalas were sent by the Pandya king to Tondaimandalam.

[216] *K.S.*, v. 60.

macro region. All claim ritual purity and respectability from their support of *varnāśramadharma* according to *smṛiti* and their support of brahmanical religion; all claim respectable secular rank; all state with pride their precedence as the leading cultivators, upon which pivot all their relationships: those with local chiefs (*uḍaiyār*), with lesser cultivators (*kuḍiyar*), with pastoralists (*kōnar* or *iḍaiyar*) and with artisans and merchants of all kinds.[217] Yet, these folk were divided, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, into great territorial groupings, i.e. the *mandalams*. The *nadu* micro unit of organization of the Chola period had, by that time, or at least in the poetic forms of the *śatakams*, ceased to be as significant as it once was; a larger territorial identification was now claimed.[218] That quite localized forms of peasant social structure and agrarian organization had not, in fact, ceased altogether to be significant in the time of the *śatakams* is clear from the earliest British records of peasant peoples of the macro region.

Vellalas, who comprised the dominant landed people from the earliest times for which there are records, conform to a clear pattern of territorial segmentation and have long done so.[219] Vokkaligas of Karnataka and Kapus or Reddis of Andhra also fall into the same pattern. Vellalas of Tamil country have been divided into four main groups according to ancient geographical terms as their titles reflect: Choliya, Tondaimandala, Pandya, and Kongu. Each major sub-division has shared a common array of cultural traits. These pertain to domestic and other ritual engagement in 'clean' (*sātvik*) occupations such as agriculture and trading; each has had its own characteristic titles as 'Pillai' among the Choliya and Pandya Vellalas, Mudaliar among the Tondaimandala Vellalas, and Kavanadan (or Gounda) among the Kongu

[217] *C.S.*, v. 27; *P.S.*, v. 10. Also see *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 1204: *kōnān*.

[218] References in the *śatakams* to locality units as the *nadu* or *kottam* are rare. In the *T.S.*, v. 87, the '24 *koṭṭams*' are mentioned; the *C.S.*, v. 61 and 81 refers to the '64 *kuḍis* as if these meant the leading, localized lineages of the *maṇḍalam* (cf. *Tamil Lexicon*, p. 968, *kuṭi*); and the *K.S.*, most explicitly of all, in v. 7, mentions the '32 *nāḍus*' of the western hill tracts of Kārmandalam and the '64 *nāḍus*' of the eastern, plain or maidan, tract of this territory. The commentator of the *kārmaṇḍala-śatakam* notes of verse 7 that the reference to 32 *nadus* is understood as the 32,000 *vēḷālar* families and the 64 *nadus* as the leading families of the eastern portion, thus, the reference is to *kārkaṭṭavēḷāḷar* of 96,000 and an explanation of the ancient numerical designation for Gangavadi as a 96,000 territory.

[219] Subrahmanian, *Śaṅgam Polity*, pp. 224-6.

Vellalas; and all contained numerous further divisions based primarily upon territory.[220] One nineteenth century estimate of Vellala sub-divisions was 590, most being the result of slight variations of a territorial sort.[221] Sharing an equally prestigious role in Karnataka, the Vokkaligas are divided into a number of territorial divisions. The Gangadikara Vokkaligas (Karalar) are concentrated in the south-central portion of Karnataka abutting modern Andhra having long shared the territory with Telugu speaking Reddis; Nonaba Vokkaligas inhabit the tract on the northern bank of the Tungabhadra, medieval Nolambavadi.[222] Other Vokkaliga groups are similarly clustered in other parts of modern Karnataka.[223]

Divisions among the Kapus of the Telugu-speaking portion of the macro region show a strong territorial character. Panta Reddis, one of the major sub-divisions among this dominant peasant group, were called 'the fourteen community' during and after the fifteenth century. Of the fourteen names, twelve may be conclusively identified as territorial: Pakanati Kapus of *pākaāḍu* (between the Pennar and Gundalakamma rivers), Velanati Kapus of *valanāḍu* (the northern portion of modern Guntur district), Motati Kapus of *mottanāḍu* (southern bank of the Krishna river), Morasu Kapus, like Morasu Vokkaligas, in Kolar district of eastern Karnataka, Munnuru Kapus of Muliki 300' country. Panta Kapus (of Gudur taluk, Nellore district), Desati Kapus (Ogeru river basin, Guntur district), and the following Panta Reddi groups are named for towns in the region: Ayodhya Kapus, Oruganti (Warangal) Kapus, Kuricheti (Kurucedu, Vellore), and Gadikota (Cuddapah district).[224]

The formal territorial segmentation of Kapus may be identified as early as the tenth century when a chief celebrated his investiture with remissions to 'Kampus' of Venadu.[225] Telugu Kammas,

[220] E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Government Press, Madras, 1909, v. 7, pp. 374, 376-81.

[221] *Manual of Madras Administration*, Government Press, Madras, 1893, v. 2, app. no. XXXII, 'Manners and Customs', p. 228.

[222] L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, Mysore University, Mysore, 1935, v. 1, p. 125. Also see the useful maps prepared for that section.

[223] Ibid., pp. 150-3.

[224] M. Somasakhara Sarma, *History of the Reḍḍi Kingdoms: Circa 1325 A.D. to Circa 1448 A.D.*, Andhra University, Waltair, 1948, pp. 51-2.

[225] *E.I.*, v. 30, no.46.

also dominant in medieval as well as modern Andhra, are associated in Pallava inscriptions with a portion of the modern taluks of Ongole and Bapatla in Guntur district which was called 'Kamma Rashtra'.[226]

This elaborate mosaic of segmented territorial groupings is further complicated over time. Ethnic groups whose historical role with respect to control of the land has been paramount in many localities of the macro region since the eighteenth century cannot simply be presumed to have been dominant in these places during earlier periods. Many changes have occurred. For example, only in the fifteenth century is there evidence of the displacement of Vellalas as the dominant land-controlling people of some parts of northern Tondaimandalam by Telugu Reddis and Balijas or by Tamil-speaking Vanniyars and their displacement from some Kaveri delta lands by Kallars.[227] Nor is it supposed that there was a simple relationship between locality or territory and those persistent social interactions which together constitute territorial social structures.

On the latter issue, it has been argued in the discussion of the Pallava period that peasant society in the Coromandel plain consisted of ranked groupings of various kinds from Brahmans to untouchables and that tracts outside of the ancient Kaveri tracts and Tondaimandalam were only gradually incorporated into the Coromandel form of peasant society. This conversion of many localities of the macro region to peasant society was often achieved under the domination of peasant folk from elsewhere, and every peasant locality contained a mix of social groups, some of which might have been residents of the territory from the earliest times of its existence as an identifiable territory while others were relatively recent arrivals. Some villages in portions of Tondaimandalam, particularly in the north, contain groups whose progenitors settled the region almost a millenium ago, whereas many villages in portions of Salem district contain groups whose arrival

[226] *A.R.E.*, 1916-17, para. 3.

[227] F.W. Ellis, *Replies to Seventeen Questions Proposed by the Government of Fort St. George Relative to Mirasi Right; with Two Appendices*, Government Gazette Office, Madras, 1818, pp. xi-xiv; M. Arokiaswami, *The Early History of the Vellar Basin; with Special Reference to the Irukkuvels of Kodumbalar*, Amudha Nilayam, Madras, 1954, p. 125; Diwan Bahadur T. Venkasami Row, *A Manual of the District of Tanjore in the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1883.

may be dated from the eighteenth century.[228] For most of the macro region, therefore, the peasant society of a locality emerged from the cumulative interaction of diverse, ranked social groups many of whom were, in origin, strangers to the place. While all such groups identified themselves, to some extent, with the locality, often comprising endogamous sub-divisions within it, the locality would inevitably become most clearly associated with those groups in whom the major authority over the land was vested — the dominant peasant people. Brahmans who were not exceptions to this territorializing of social groups, now were lower ranked peoples.[229]

Considering the complex configuration of localized ethnic groups, numerous small-scale migrations and local conquests by different peasant folk, and the many small territorial arenas where all of this took place in the macro region, in what sense is it possible to speak of a Vijayanagara society? If it refers to that segment of Indian humanity under Vijayanagara rule, the notion of a Vijayanagara society is a weak one. The Vijayanagara political system provided some coherence, to be sure. Vijayanagara kings were known in all parts of the macro region as great (and it must have been hoped, distant) sovereigns to whom chiefs great and small paid occasional homage; Vijayanagara fortresses under Brahman commanders would have been known to many as they moved about searching for land or trade or on pilgrimage. But the formal political and administrative structure generated as much fission as fusion. It is quite another kind of integration that provided a significant measure of identification with some meaningful whole for most people of the macro region in Vijayanagara times. This was created by the Hindu temple and Hindu sect.

'Temple' and 'sect' are terms which serve poorly to convey the meanings of *kōyil* and *campiradāyam* (Sanskrit: *saṁpradāya*) because the English words necessarily carry meanings derived

[228] *The Baramahal Records*; Sec. III, 'Inhabitants', Government of Madras, Madras, 1907, for evidence of this.

[229] Distinctions were made between the dominant peasant families and those of lesser importance, *vēḷkuḍi-uḷavar*, or 'fallen vellala's, according to Kanakasabhai, op. cit., p. 113; Brahmans are discussed in *Manual of Madras Administration*, v. 2, App. XXXII, 'Manners and Customs', pp. 226-7; Thurston, op. cit., v. 1, especially pp. 334-93; also *see* N. Ramesan, *Copper Plate Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh Government Museum, Hyderabad*, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1962, v. 1, p. 192.

from the cultural context of their provenance. Such meanings lead to distorted understandings of the relationships among Hindu deities, devotees, and priestly and preceptoral intermediaries. To some extent, of course, these distortions and their potential for confusion are recognized. There nevertheless remains a tendency to suppose certain likenesses with other religious traditions, especially western ones, and these presumed similarities inflect the terms 'temple' and 'sect'.

In medieval South India, divinity attached to many kinds of beings and sacredness attached to many kinds of places. The term 'temple' may therefore be applied to a prodigious array of places where some divinity was worshipped; all may be called *kōyil*. Those places known as 'temples' to modern scholarship by their designation as *śrīkōyil*, by their distinctive architectural features, by their staff of ritual functionaries, by their being ancient resorts of pilgrimage, and, indeed, by their inscriptions are but a selection of the vast totality of places to which the term *kōyil* is appropriately applied. There is no unambiguously coded place or thing called a 'temple' as in Christianity there is a church.

Nor, in the puranic Hinduism of medieval South India, is there an institution like the church in Christianity or *vihāra* in Buddhism in the sense of a bounded domain of action and meaning which separates it from other domains, such as the church from the state, the clergy from the laity. On the contrary, a temple was wherever a group of devotees founded a deity and were co-sharers in its generosity, whether this was a great shrine like that of Venkatesvara at Tirupati or the tree shrine of a tutelary goddess. Generically, a temple is a nexus of sharers consisting of a deity and its worshippers; its purpose is to protect and to transform the community of worshippers by the boons of the god; and its means are the transvaluing of substances — human and non-human — offered to the god and returned to its devotees. The temple 'institutionalized' — that is, considered as one among many institutions in society as it was seen by British administrators during the nineteenth century and to an extent by modern scholars — is the temple misconceived. Seen as a set of sharing beneficiaries in the generosity of a deity is to see the temple as it was understood by people of the medieval age, and, conceived in this way, the temple was perhaps above all else the model of the conception of shares and sharing of that time. What shares of village income was for the

distribution and redistribution of resources in the material order of the time, shares of support to deities and *prasadam* from these deities was in the moral order of the time. And just as it was stated that there could be no complete village as a material order without its eighteen *āyagārs* holding service shares of land, so it would have been that there could be no complete moral order without the sharing and transactional nexus centring upon a god, whether of a family, a *jāti*, a clan or of a hamlet, a village, a locality, a kingdom.

A recent general essay on caste felicitously states certain of the relations to which attention has been directed in the present discussion. It opens with the following sentence:

> Caste systems are moral systems that differentiate and rank the whole population of a society in corporate units (castes) generally defined by descent, marriage, and occupation.[230]

It goes on:

> Every human genus (and therefore every caste) is thought to have as the shared and corporate property of its members a particular substance (e.g. *sarīra*, 'body', *rakta*, 'blood') embodying its code for conduct (*dharma*). Every caste's inborn code enjoins it to maintain its substance and morality, its particular occupation, and its correct exchanges with other castes.[231]

And continues :

> The Hindu gods to be worshipped are related among themselves, like men, by shared and exchanged natural substance. They have not merely abstract qualities and representations like the Vedic gods, but also particular life-like images, biographies, bodily functions, and specialized relations to men. They are attached by particular codes of worship to particular occasions, communities, and genera of persons. . . .[232] The codes of Hindu worship require the existence of complex local communities of castes. Worship cannot proceed without the priest to bring the living substance of the god into the image, made by an image maker. . . . To sponsor the worship there must be local worshippers of means, typically a ruler or a man of wealth, who can by gifts entreat a priest to mediate with the god. There must be specialists of appropriate castes. . . to feed, attend, and entertain the god.[233]

230 Mckim Marriott and Ronald Inden, 'Caste Systems', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed (1973), v. 3, p. 982.

231 Ibid., p. 983.

232 Ibid., p. 985.

233 Loc. cit.

This conception of a moral order comprising communities of Hindus, their gods, and priestly intermediaries sets the essential framework for consideration of the great temple in medieval South India as a co-sharing body of worshippers. In its insistence upon priests, especially Brahmans, and a variegated corps of caste specialists to serve the god, this conception obviously pertains not only to great temples but also to the entire range of shrines to which the term *kōyil* is applied. Moreover, the structure of religious affiliation of the period provided for the integration of worship and worshippers of even the most humble tutelary deity with the highest form of *bhakti*, puranic worship of the age. This integration was made possible by several means: pilgrimage, priestly affiliations, and, most importantly, sectarian organization. The great temples of South India form the apex of this complex system of affiliational linkages.

Temples serve the moral order of medieval and modern South Indian society in that they are the most important context in which moral definition occurs. Temples define in the sense that they determine or fix boundaries of social groupings and social space reckoned to mark off the community of co-sharers in the worship of a particular god. A Tamil term for 'lineage' is *paṅgāḷi*, derived from the verb *paṅku*, 'to share', and the lineage in South Indian kinship is no less delimited by shared devotion to a lineage tutelary (*kuladēva*) than by genealogy. Similarly, a village is no less delimited by the worshippers of its *gramadēva* than by its administrative boundaries. It is therefore interesting to notice that *mariyadai* is the term most frequently used to refer to the receipt of transvalued substances from a god (*prasādam*). This Saṅskrit-derived word (*maryādā*) is glossed 'honour' in most usage. Thus, *parivaṭṭam*, or the cloth which has part of the vestments of the god and distributed as *prasādam* to worshippers, is *kōyilmariyādai*, that is, 'temple honour' and it is worn on the head of the recipient as a a crown.[234] *Maryādā* has the meaning of boundary, border, limit (as in frontier or river bank); it also has a moral aspect as in the phrase 'limits of. . . propriety, rule, or custom.[235] Hence, if in the

[234] *Tamil Lexicon*, v. 4, p. 2518. The author gratefully records his indebtedness to Carol Breckenridge for having brought this entire large and important issue to his attention; discussions with Arjun Appadurai and Kathi L. Rose were also valuable.

[235] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 791.

transactional nexus of a god and its worshippers, which a temple can be construed to be, the generosity of deity is expressed by conferring 'honours' in the *prasādam* given to and accepted by devotees of the god, then those who may offer to and receive from the god must be seen as defined with respect to some criterion. Criteria may be socially denotative; they may also be spatially denotative; in all cases these criteria are viewed as morally valanced, that is possessing a dimension of appropriateness in *nature* and in *conduct*.

Notwithstanding the importance of temples in South Indian culture during the Vijayanagara period and notwithstanding the fact that most of what is known of the time comes from temple inscriptions, little is known aggregatively about temples of the macro region. Almost nothing of their number, their spatial and temporal distribution, nor their cultic affiliations are known. An opportunity to fill this gap in knowledge is provided for Tamil country at least by the publication over the past decade of a series of volumes which form part of the 1961 Census conducted in the Madras State. These data have been analysed by the present writer and the results published elsewhere. Certain of the findings and their implications may be summarized here.[236]

[236] India, Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1961, vol. IX, Madras State*, pt XI-D. 'Temples of Madras State', 7 vols. The analysis of these temple data appears under the title, 'Temples of Tamil Country, 1300-1750 A.D.', in a symposium edited by the present writer dealing with various aspects of South Indian temples in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 14, no.1 (1977); also published under the title: *South Indian Temples: An Analytical Reconsideration*, ed. Burton Stein, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978. Before considering the significance of these data taken from the 1961 Census volumes of *Temples of Madras State* (and *Temples of Tamilnadu*), it is well to briefly catalogue the possible error factors which together caution care in using the data and interpreting the findings derived from them. Two major problems are the reliability of the method used for collecting the temple data and the definition of 'important' applied to the temples enumerated in the census volumes. No trained personnel were used in the census operations to verify information on the temples provided by questionaire. Hence, the age of temples, one of the dimensions to which saliency is given in the present discussion cannot be taken with the confidence that might have been wished. Moreover, some of the individual returns of deity identification, as given in the printed volumes, are plainly wrong (e.g., the Minakshi-Sundaresvara temple in Madurai is returned as dedicated to a deity other than Siva, i.e., 'Other Deity'. This too contributes uncertainty to the findings discussed here. Even if such problems did not exist, another major source of error derives from the temples actually enumerated. These were required to be 'important' shrines, not simply shrines of village deities or 'bajanai koyils'. What constitutes 'important' here is problematic of course, for *all* shrines are

Tables VIII-3 and VIII-4 summarize data on 2035 temples which attained an important status between A.D. 1300 and 1750. Figures VIII-1 and VIII-2 provide a graphic and schematic display of these tabular data.

TABLE VIII-3
Temples of Tamil Nadu, A.D. 1300-1750, by Deity, *Mandalam* and District[a]
N-2035 Figures in parentheses are percentages of totals.

	Deity						
	Siva	Vishnu	Murugan	Ganesa	Amman	Other	Total by District
TONDAIMANDALAM							
Chingleput Dt*	82(46)	62(34)	6(3)	8(4)	0(0)	23(13)	181(100)
North Arcot Dt**	77(38)	69(34)	9(4)	12(6)	21(10)	15(8)	203(100)
South Arcot Dt							
Tindivanam T.	8(35)	11(50)	0(0)	1(5)	2(10)	0(0)	22(1000)
Total	167(41)	142(35)	15(4)	21(5)	23(6)	41(9)	406(100)

*Excluding Madras City
**Excluding Tiruvannamalai T.

'important' to some body of worshippers. In Chingleput district (vol. i) the 1961 Census temple volume estimates that about twenty per cent of temples in the district were included in the designation 'important temples'. The criteria used to determine the importance of tempies were that they be structural shrines of durable materials, that they be consecrated, and that they possess means for carrying out worship under priests. The inclusion of some, but not all shrines, raises questions about coverage; another source of coverage error for the Tamil country as a whole is the absence of information on the temples of Tanjavur. Temples of Tanjavur are absent because data on the estimated 1809 'important' temples of that district had not been presented in a form comparable with temples of other Tamil districts. This creates an important gap in total coverage and is the more important since Tanjavur can have been expected to provide a substantial number of temples.

	Deity						Total by District
	Siva	Vishnu	Murugan	Ganesa	Amman	Other	
NADUVIL-NADU							
South Arcot Dt*	75(40)	57(30)	7(3)	16(8)	25(13)	11(6)	188(100)
Tiruchirapalli Dt							
Perambalur T.	46(44)	38(37)	1(1)	2(2)	11(11)	5(5)	103(100)
North Arcot Dt							
Tiruvannamalai T.	3(33)	2(21)	0(0)	0(0)	1(11)	3(33)	9(100)
Salem Dt, Attur T.	10(31)	7(22)	0(0)	4(13)	10(31)	1(3)	32(100)
Total	134(40)	101(32)	8(2)	22(6)	47(14)	20(6)	332(100)
*Excluding Chidambaram T. and Tindivanam T.							
KONGUMANDALAM							
Coimbatore Dt	63(17)	88(23)	16(4)	37(10)	145(39)	25(7)	374(100)
Madurai Dt, Paini T.	2(25)	4(51)	0(0)	0(0)	1(12)	1(12)	8(100)
Salem Dt, Tiruchengode T.	6(21)	9(32)	0(0)	2(7)	10(36)	1(4)	28(100)
Namakkal T.	13(19)	16(23)	1(1)	8(11)	25(36)	7(10)	70(100)
Tiruchirapalli Dt, Karur T.	8(22)	9(24)	2(6)	0(0)	17(45)	1(3)	37(100)
Total	92(18)	126(24)	19(4)	47(9)	198(38)	35(7)	517(100)
PANDIMANDALAM							
Ramanathapuram Dt	65(37)	33(19)	10(6)	16(20)	34(9)	16(9)	174(100)
Tirunelveli Dt	89(30)	90(31)	15(5)	28(16)	48(10)	25(8)	295(100)
Madurai Dt *	32(19)	42(25)	9(5)	12(22)	38(7)	38(22)	171(100)
Kanyakumari Dt	19(14)	21(15)	0(0)	35(25)	36(25)	29(21)	140(100)
Total	205(26)	188(24)	34(4)	91(12)	156(20)	108(14)	780(100)
*Excluding Palni T.							

ABBREVIATIONS: Dt = DISTRICT T. = Taluk

[a] India (Republic), Census Commissioner, *Census of India, 1961*, v.IX, *Madras*, pt. XI-D, *Temples of Madras State*: i, Chingleput and Madras

TABLE VIII-4

Temples of Tamil Nadu, A.D. 1300-1750, by Deity, Period and *Mandalam*

N = 2035 Figures in parentheses are percentages of totals.

	Deity						Total by *Mandalam*	Total of Period
	Siva	Vishnu	Murugan	Ganesa	Amman	Other		
a. A.D. 1300-1450								
N_a = 179(9% of N)								
Tondaimandalam	29(47)	23(38)	2(3)	3(5)	2(3)	2(3)	61(100)	(34)
Naduvil-nadu	5(55)	4(45)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	9(100)	(5)
Kongumandalam	3(49)	1(17)	0(0)	1(17)	0(0)	1(17)	6(100)	(3)
Pandimandalam	44(43)	23(22)	4(4)	3(3)	13(13)	16(15)	103(100)	(58)
Total for Tamilnadu	81(45)	51(29)	6(3)	7(4)	15(8)	19(11)	179(100)	(100)
b. A.D. 1450-1550								
N_b = 331 (16% of N)								
Tondaimandalam	25(48)	16(30)	2(4)	5(9)	0(0)	5(9)	53(100)	(16)
Naduvil-nadu	24(43)	17(30)	3(5)	4(7)	6(11)	2(4)	56(100)	(17)
Kongumandalam	24(24)	24(24)	6(6)	3(3)	35(36)	7(7)	99(100)	(30)
Pandimandalam	37(30)	30(24)	6(5)	13(11)	19(15)	18(15)	123(100)	(37)
Total for Tamilnadu	110(33)	87(26)	17(5)	25(8)	60(18)	32(10)	331(100)	(100)

City (1965): ii, Tiruchirapalli and South Arcot (1966); iii, Coimbatore and Salem (1968); iv, North Arcot and Nilgiris (1968); v. Kanya Kumari and Tirunelveli (1968); vi. Ramanathapuram and Madurai (1969); and vii. Thanjavur, pt (under the altered title of Temples of Tamilnadu' (1971).

	Deity							
	Siva	Vishnu	Murugan	Ganesa	Amman	Other	Total by Mandalam	Total by District
c. A.D. 1550-1650								
N_c=626 (31% of N)								
Tondaimandalam	38(34)	38(34)	5(5)	6(5)	8(7)	16(15)	111(100)	(18)
Naduvil-nadu	46(41)	35(31)	3(3)	5(5)	17(15)	5(5)	111(100)	(18)
Kongumandalam	32(20)	42(27)	4(3)	12(8)	53(35)	10(7)	152(100)	(24)
Pandimandalam	67(27)	61(24)	11(4)	30(12)	49(19)	34(14)	252(100)	(40)
Total for Tamilnadu	182(29)	176(28)	23(4)	53(9)	127(20)	65(10)	626(100)	(100)
d. A.D. 1650-1750								
N_d=899 (44% of N)								
Tondaimandalam	75(42)	65(36)	6(3)	7(4)	13(7)	15(8)	181(100)	(20)
Naduvil-nadu	59(39)	45(29)	2(1)	13(8)	24(16)	13(8)	156(100)	(17)
Kongumandalam	34(13)	59(23)	9(3)	31(12)	100(43)	17(6)	260(100)	(29)
Pandimandalam	57(19)	72(24)	13(4)	45(15)	75(25)	40(13)	302(100)	(33)
Total for Tamilnadu	225(25)	241(27)	30(3)	96(11)	222(25)	85(9)	899(100)	(100)
TOTALS: A.D. 1300-1750								
Tondaimandalam	167(41)	142(35)	15(4)	21(5)	23(6)	38(9)	406(100)	(20)
Naduvil-nadu	134(40)	101(32)	8(2)	22(6)	47(14)	20(6)	332(100)	(16)
Kongumandalam	92(18)	126(24)	19(4)	47(9)	198(38)	35(7)	517(100)	(26)
Pandimandalam	205(26)	186(24)	34(4)	91(12)	156(20)	108(14)	780(100)	(38)
Total for Tamilnadu	598(29)	555(27)	76(4)	181(21)	424(21)	201(10)	2035(100)	(100)

Figure VIII-1: Temples of Tamil Nadu, A.D. 1300-1750, by *Mandalam*, Deity and Period

N=2035 Source : Data of Table

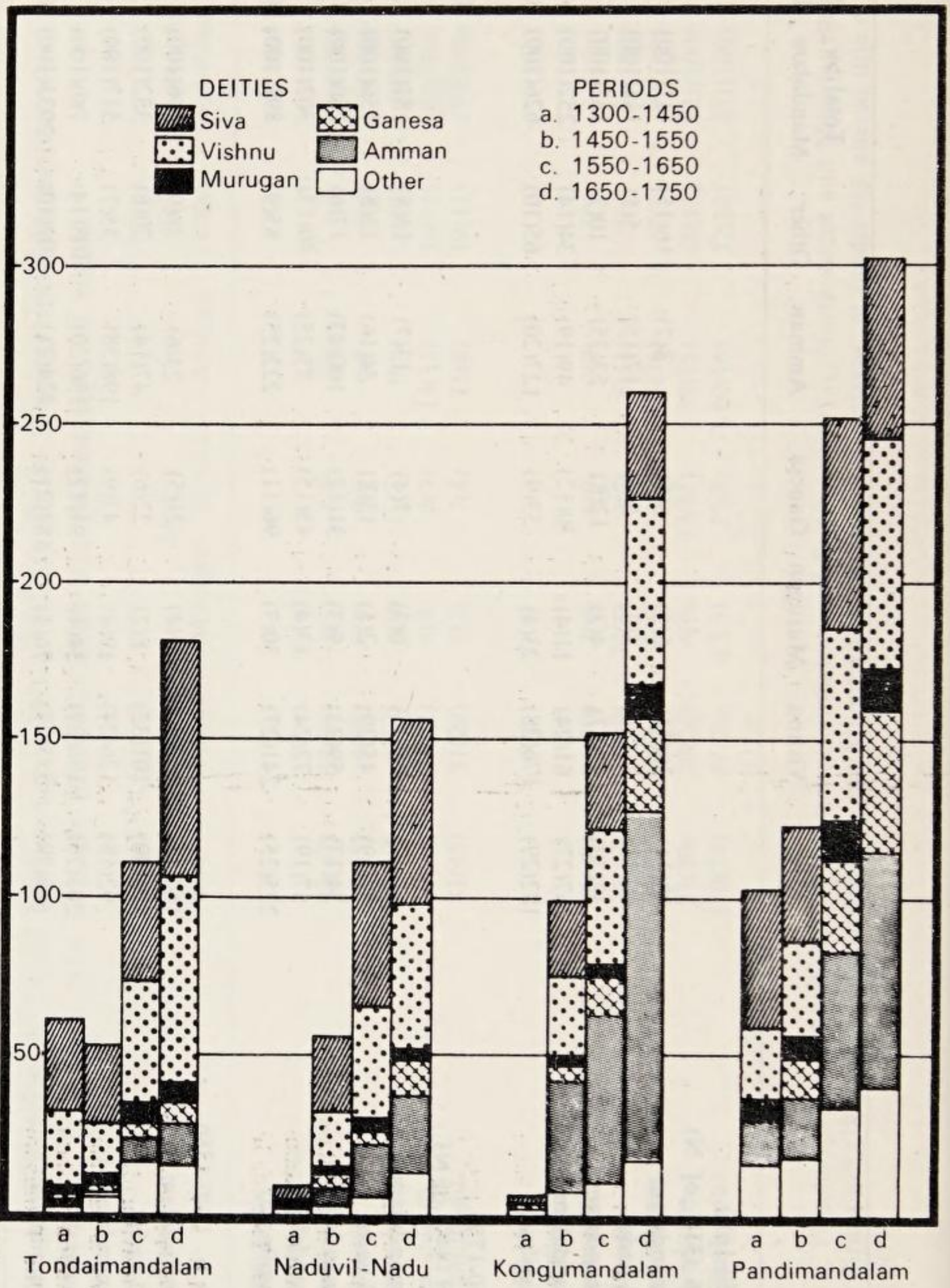
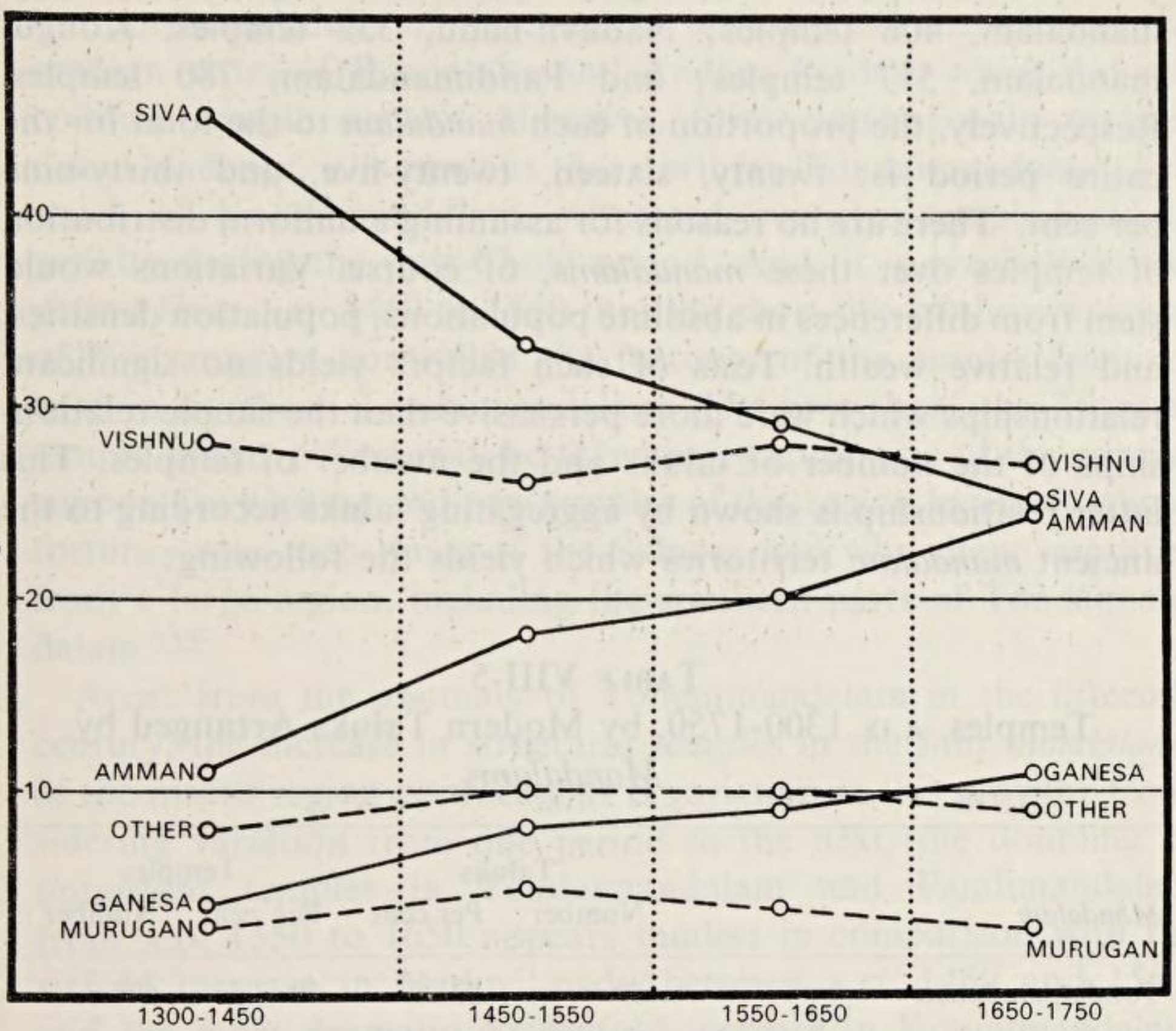


Figure VIII-2: Proportions of Temples of Tamil Nadu by Deity, for Four Periods, A.D. 1300-1750

N = 2035 Source : Data of Table



Variation in the number of temples by *mandalam* is a conspicuous feature in the tables and figures. The 2035 temples which attained importance between A.D. 1300 and 1750 are unevenly distributed over the four *mandalam*s taking all of the periods together: Tondaimandalam, 406 temples; Naduvil-nadu, 332 temples, Kongumandalam, 517 temples; and Pandimandalam, 780 temples. Respectively, the proportion of each *mandalam* to the total for the entire period is: twenty, sixteen, twenty-five, and thirty-nine per cent. There are no reasons for assuming a uniform distribution of temples over these *mandalam*s, of course. Variations would stem from differences in absolute populations, population densities, and relative wealth. Tests of such factors yields no significant relationships which were more persuasive than the simple relationships of the number of taluks and the number of temples. This latter relationship is shown by aggregating taluks according to the ancient *mandalam* territories which yields the following:

TABLE VIII-5

Temples, A.D. 1300-1750, by Modern Taluks Arranged by *Mandalam*s

Mandalam	Taluks		Temples	
	Number	Per cent	Per cent	Number
Tondaimandalam	19	27	20	406
Naduvil-nadu	9	13	16	332
Kongumandalam	13	20	25	517
Pandimandalam	28	40	39	780
Total	69	100	100	2035

While there is considerable variation in the size and population of taluks of modern Tamil Nadu State, the finding of a close relationship of taluks and temples in the period A.D. 1300 to 1750, prompts the suggestion that the modern taluk may have an historical validity not usually recognized, that most have been cultural areas for the last five hundred years containing at least one temple of importance within its area.

The general increase in temple construction over all four *mandalam*s in each period shown graphically in Fig.VIII-1, is somewhat

startling in only one particular. That is, the single instance of a decrease in Tondaimandalam in the period, A.D. 1450-1550. In part, this is an artifact of the data. There is no comparable information on temples for a substantial part of Tondaimandalam because the northern taluks of this ancient territory are included in the modern states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh which did not conduct temple surveys. However, from contemporary inscriptional evidence, it is obvious that northern Tondaimandalam, like much of Kongumandalam, witnessed intensive temple-building activity during the post-Chola period. And, it is precisely in the period from A.D. 1450 to 1550 that the short-lived Saluva dynasty of Vijayanagara controlled the fortunes of the empire from its base in northern Tondaimandalam. The growth of the Tirupati temple in this period may be taken as symptomatic of the general support for existing and new temples of this region by chiefs whose fortunes rose with those of the Saluvas and who drew resources from a large region, including the southern parts of Tondaimandalam.[237]

Apart from the anomaly of Tondaimandalam in the fifteenth century, the increase in structural temples in the four *mandalams* of the macro region is striking as is variation in this growth. Considering variation from one period to the next, the doubling of important temples in Tondaimandalam and Pandimandalam from A.D. 1550 to 1650 appears modest in comparison with the sixfold increase in Naduvil-nadu between A.D. 1450 and 1550, and the more dramatic sixteenfold increase in Kongumandalam at the same time. These relatively short-termed variations may in turn be compared with changes in the rates among *mandalams* over all of the periods. In Kongu the transformation of older modest shrines into major temples or the construction of new, large temples increased by a factor of forty between A.D. 1300 and 1750, and in Naduvil-nadu the increase was an impressive sixteenfold; whereas in Pandimandalam, with the largest number of such temples, the increase between the first and the last periods was about threefold, and in Tondaimandalam it was even less.

Finally, the 1961 census data reveal differences in the propor-

[237] Stein, 'Tirupati Temple', pp. 53, 61-2, especially Table 3, p. 53 recording grants of land to the Tirupati temple between A.D. 830 and 1628 as 168 of which all but 21 came between A.D. 1456 and 1564 and grants of money as 397 of which all but 126 came during the same period.

tions and number of major temples presided over by the six types of deities utilized in the survey. Considering the entire period of four and a half centuries, 2035 temples analysed here show Siva temples to comprise twenty-nine per cent of the total, Vishnu temples twenty-six per cent, Murugan temples four per cent, Ganesh temples nine per cent, Amman temples twenty-one per cent, and 'Other Deities' ten per cent. Each of the *mandalam*s contribute to this array in quite different ways. Thus, in Tondaimandalam, Siva temples comprise forty-one per cent for all periods while in Kongumandalam, Siva shrines comprised only eighteen per cent of the major temples. In contrast, Amman temples in the former territory comprised a mere six per cent whereas in Kongu, Amman temples accounted for thirty-eight per cent of its major temples between A.D. 1300 and 1750..

Or, looked at slightly differently, the six types of deities can be reduced to three classes of gods to elicit certain differences. Siva and Vishnu can be considered together as universal Hindu gods of the highest order; Murugan and Ganesha may be regarded as secondary universal deities in medieval Hinduism; while Amman and 'Other Deities' are essentially local, tutelary gods. Arranged thus, Siva and Vishnu temples constitute the overwhelming majority of temples for Tondaimandalam over all of the periods: seventy-six per cent; and in Naduvil-nadu, these two deities accounted for seventy-two per cent of those presiding over major temples. In both *mandalam*s, Siva temples dominate. By contrast, only forty-two per cent of the major temples of Kongu were the resort of Siva or Vishnu, and here Vishnu temples predominated in about the same proportion as Siva temples in Tondaimandalam and Naduvil-nadu (i.e. about six per cent). In Pandimandalam Siva and Vishnu temples in almost equal proportion, comprised half of the major temples from A.D. 1300 to 1750.

Murugan and Ganesha temples were unevenly distributed over the four *mandalam*s considering the entire period. In Tondaimandalam these secondary, universal deities constituted nine per cent of all major temples with Ganesha temples three times as numerous. The elephant-faced deity also dominated over his puranic brother as the object of major temple worship in Kongumandalam and in Naduvil-nadu where these two deities comprised thirteen and eight per cent of temples respectively.

While all of these findings of the 1961 census survey of temples

pertaining to temples of the Vijayanagara period deserve attention, concentration will be given to the interaction of Siva and Amman temples.

A detailed argument on the question of the relationship between Siva and Amman, has been given elsewhere by the author.[238] A summary of that argument begins with the observation of what appears to be the displacement or supercession of major temple devoted to Siva by those devoted to goddesses. Such a notion could be taken from Figure VIII-2 where there is shown to be a quite startling reciprocal symmetry in the curves plotting the proportion of each of these types of temples over the four periods. This finding jars conventional expectations based upon the dominance of Siva worship among Tamilians from Chola times at least and the dynamism of the Saiva Siddhanta movement during the medieval period.

An alternative to displacement as an explanation of the finding on Siva and Amman deities is one of complementarity, and this proposed explanation prompts a useful consideration of the relationship of worship and sectarian affiliations of Tamilians during the Vijayanagara period, the subject of the present section.

Complementarity in the relations between major Siva temples and major shrines devoted to goddesses rests in two historical features of South Indian religion. One is the establishment of separate *devi* shrines within the precincts of and thus as independent components of Siva and Vishnu temples from the eleventh century onward; the other is that Siva deities and goddesses alike have served as territorial deities.

The progressive enhancement of *devi* worship as a component of the highest form of puranic Hindu praxis in South India and the guardianship of goddesses over Tamilians combined to produce the startling prominence of Amman temples in parts of Tamil country, especially in Kongu and in Pandya countries. It is to be stressed that these often impressively enshrined goddesses are correctly treated as independent deities by the 1961 census survey; they are not regarded as the consorts of either Siva or Vishnu. However, religious scholars have noted that though the many goddess shrines in Tamil country do shelter seemingly independent divinities, these are often hagiographically linked, at least weakly, to a major Vedic god, usually Siva.[239] This linkage may be considered to

[238] See note 236.

[239] Whitehead, op. cit., pp. 17ff, in which categorical distinctions between Vedic

strengthen the complementarity hypothesis advanced here, especially when it is considered with other evidence which may be adduced on religious affiliations in Kongu, where the highest proportion of Amman shrines came into importance during the Vijayanagara period.

How the increasingly numerous Amman shrines were complementarily linked to Siva shrines cannot be ascertained from evidence of the Vijayanagara period. The process must be inferred with the assistance of late eighteenth century evidence from British sources (e.g. the *Baramahal Records* and Buchanan's *Journey. . . .*) and from more recent ethnographical research. From these post-Vijayanagara vantage points, the contact of Amman shrines with established canonical shrines seems to have been achieved through affiliations of priests and sectarian and pilgrimage networks. Non-Brahman priestly custodians (*paṇḍārams*) of most Amman shrines appear to have become participants in the management of great shrines of Siva as well as Vishnu where Brahman priests were dominant ritual functionaries. Entry into and participation within these great shrines by non-Brahman religious leaders was achieved through endowments (*kaṭṭaḷais*) to these shrines in a process recently elaborated by Carol A. Breckenridge. In addition, there were connections of such non-Brahman religious leaders with sectarian organizations through *mathas* located at the great shrines of the canonical gods. Sectarian *mathas* were the seat of sect organizations, and there were both Brahman and non-Brahman orders. To the latter *mathas*, under their *mudaliyār ācāryas* reference has been made above (chapter VI). These institutions were established during the later Chola period in several parts of the southern Tamil country and were regularly attached to major Siva temples.[240] Discussing these *mathas*, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri noted that while they were first established only at major religous centres, they soon

deities and village deities are delineated, the former possessing the following attributes: they are 'forces of nature', not 'facts of life'; they are male, not female; they are worshipped according to *bhakti* principles of *ahimsa*, not propitiated with animal sacrifices; and they are officiated by Brahman *pujaris*, not *paṇḍārams*. However, in the lengthy story of the goddess Ammavaru or Ankamma (pp. 126ff), this goddess is consistently associated with Siva and symbols of Siva, especially (pp. 132-8). Also, H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Harper Bros., Torchbook, New York, 1962, pp. 189-216.

[240] *A.R.E.*, 1909, para. 53, pp. 101-2; Rajamanickam, op. cit, pp. 236-8.

> spread all over the land until almost every important temple came to possess one or more *maṭha*s functioning in close proximity to it. In course of time they grouped themselves around a limited number of *santānas* or successors of *guru*s, each having a central *maṭha* which was looked up to for guidance by a number of subordinate *maṭha*s in different places.[241]

He observes further that while the heads of these orders were often ascetics who could own no property,

> their *maṭha*s often owned vast estates earmarked for their maintenance and the encouragement of learning and the arts. . . . The well-to-do householder has ever been ready to make gifts (*dāna*) to the orders because he was assured of a good berth [*sic*] in the other world as much for his *dāna* as the ascetic for his renunciation and austerity.[242]

What Nilakanta Sastri might further have pointed out in connection with the wealth and influence of these heads of religious orders (*maṭhādipatis*) is that they utilized their material resources to contribute to the growth of temples in the macro region by their often substantial endowments from the wealth which was conferred upon them by their followers; they also constituted the clearest linkage element among the various shrines of Tamil country through their influence with peasant followerships for whom access to major regional temples devoted to the worship of Vedic deities was otherwise limited. The non-Brahman *santāna*s were the crucial intermediaries between the priesthoods and worshippers of local subcaste temples and the great temple centres of Tamil country. It is therefore no coincidence that the proliferation of major structural shrines devoted to peasant subcaste tutelaries and the non-Brahman *matha* movement occurred at about the same time. These two developments must be viewed as causally linked. Such a view addresses the question of vertical connections among shrines raised by the recent work of Brenda Beck.[243] It accords well with the evidence from Kongu provided by the *Baramahal Records* and Buchanan, and it is a view which finds impressive inscriptional and other support from the Vijayanagara period according to the recent doctoral research of Arjun Appadurai whose writings have shaped much of the present discussion.

In a paper presented recently, Appadurai has offered a powerful

241 *Development of Religion in South India*, p. 118.

242 Ibid., p. 117.

243 *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver 1973.

interpretation of Vaishnava sectarianism during the Vijayanagara period.[244] His argument extends and bolsters suggestions outlined above with respect to the relationship of Siva and Amman temples. This investigation of the *vaḍagalai-teṅgalai* conflict and his original formulations of Vaishnava sectarian history in South India bear centrally upon the question of relationships among temples in the macro region, between temples and sectarian organizations, and between both of these and various levels of political authority. His findings address with particular cogency the manner in which various levels of shrines during the Vijayanagara age achieved and maintained a coherent integration in the absence of formal, bureaucratic, ecclesiastical structures.

Appadurai's work on medieval Vaishnavism is part of a larger research work dealing with the Sri Parthasarathiswami temple in Triplicane during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In that larger study, he argues that the distribution of temple honours is central for an understanding of Hindu temples in modern South Indian society. His research and that of Carol Appadurai Breckenridge on the Minakshi-Sundaresvara and Ramesvaram temples[245] have brought forward considerations of the greatest importance for understanding not only the modern temple in its social context, but the temple in its medieval setting as well.

The work of these two scholars outlines a redistributive process involving temple honours and material resources. Appadurai delineates four sets of transactions involving honours during the Vijayanagara period: the *stānattar* of temples conferred honours (e.g. *prasādam*) on warrior chiefs and kings; kings and chiefs

[244] Workshop on Religion in South India at Bucknell University under the auspices of the Conference on South Indian Religion, June, 1975 ('Honor and Conquest: Warrior-Kings and Vaisnava Sectarianism in South India 1350-1700'). A slightly altered version presented at a conference on 'Honor and Honors', University of Chicago, June, 1975 ('Why Think About Honors?'). This paper is published in the symposium number of the *Indian Social and Economic History Review* devoted to South Indian temples and under the editorship of the present writer, mentioned above, note 236.

[245] In two papers entitled: 'Betel Nut and Honors; Exchange Relationships and Temple Entry in a South Indian Temple' presented at the Association of Asian Studies meeting in San Francisco, March, 1975, and 'Notes to an Honor-Interested Generation: Honor in South India' for a Conference on Honor and Honors, University of Chicago, June 1975. Versions of this work are published in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* as well as the symposium number, edited by Burton Stein, of the *Indian Social and Economic History Review*; note 236.

conferred honours, e.g. insignia and regalia upon sectarian leaders; temple leaders conferred honours on sectarian leaders (e.g. *prasādam*); and sectarian leaders conferred honours on chiefs and kings (e.g. investiture). Material transactions among these various actors involved endowments by chiefs and kings to temples and gifts to sectarian leaders as well as endowments to temples by sectarian leaders. These transactions in the media of honours and material resources are equal or symmetrical with one exception. That is, while between chiefs and kings, on the one hand, and sectarian notables, on the other hand, honours are exchanged symmetrically, material resources went only from chiefs and kings to sectarian leaders. Appadurai asks whether, in the relationship between chiefs and kings and sectarian leaders, there is a transaction in some medium or of some sort to correspond with the material resources conferred by the former upon the latter. That is, what is the gain of political personages in their transactions with sectarian leaders? The answer: kings and chiefs received political constituencies. Sectarian leaders were 'crucial intermediaries for the introduction, extension, and legitimation of warrior control over. . . [peoples] and regions. . . [which] might otherwise have resisted conquest'. Appadurai concludes:

> Put differently, it might be said that the ceremonial exchanges of honour between warrior-kings and sectarian leaders rendered public, stable and culturally appropriate an exchange at the level of politics and economics. These warrior-kings bartered the control of agrarian resources gained by military prowess, for access to the redistributive processes of temples, which were controlled by sectarian leaders. Conversely, in their struggles with each other, and their own local and regional efforts to consolidate their control over temples, sectarian leaders found the support of these warrior-kings timely and profitable. Empirically, and diachronically, this relationship is neither simple nor transparent. It is a complex symbiosis in which mobile figures, of both types, augmented and sustained each other.[246]

To the dynamism of the Vijayanagara period engendered by relations among temples, sects, and the warrior élite, must be added the modified functions of the right and left divisions of castes. During the Vijayanagara period, the potential or relative character of the right and left divisions of the Chola period continues; the

[246] Cited from Appadurai's doctoral thesis, entitled 'Temple Politics in South India; The Case of the Sri Parthasarathiswami Temple', ch. 2, pp. 14-15, Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago, 1976.

divisions are not corporate social units as are castes and sects[247], but divisions, like the segmentary state, underwent modifications. Particularly the divisions were differentially linked to two commanding institutions of the age: temples and royal figures.

The question of functions of the dual divisions during the Vijayanagara period can scarcely be separated from the persistent composition of each division. During the Chola period, there is only the most inferential evidence on their composition. However, thanks to the evidence provided by foreigners in South India during the eighteenth century and after, it is possible to specify in considerable detail the composition of each division in various parts of the macro region.

The most complete inventory of the constituent social units of the divisions becomes available in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At that time, references to the dual divisions are often to urban contexts utterly foreign to the Chola age. Thus, while it would obviously be improper to consider this eighteenth and nineteenth century evidence for an analysis of the dual divisions during the Chola age — that is to provide eighteenth century answers to tenth century questions — it is appropriate to consider this later evidence for more proximate periods when urbanization had in fact become as significant as it was during Vijayanagara times. Moreover, the temporal reach involved is not different from that of one of the master craftsmen of rural historiography, Marc Bloch, whose classic work on the agrarian system of France to the eighteenth century provides examples of the use of the relatively full evidence of the eighteenth century to clarify much earlier situations.[248]

European travellers and early administrators are responsible for much of the detailed understanding we possess about the functions and composition of the dual social divisions. Because these divisions fall outside brahmanical culture — Brahmans being

[247] Where 'sect' is equivalent to *saṁpradāya*, 'When a *guru* or set of *gurus* is recognized by a series of disciples, a particular cultural tradition *(saṁpradāya)* is established, and its authentic transmission is traced through a chain of disciples, who in turn become *gurus* to the next generation. In this sense, every Indian sect or philosophical school forms a cultural tradition', from his 'The Rādhā-Krishna *Bhajanas* of Madras City', *in* Milton Singer (ed.), *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, Chicago, 1968, p. 108. Also: M. Monier-Williams, *Hinduism*, London, 1906, pp. 135-6.

[248] *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966.

excluded from the divisions[249] — and notwithstanding the references to the divisions in inscriptions of the Chola period and later, the South Indian brahmanical tradition completely fails to note the divisions. However, Europeans of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were as struck by the divisions as they were nonplussed by them. The Abbé J.A. Dubois, in India from 1793 to 1823, commented upon the divisions in the following way.

> There is yet another division more general than any I have referred to yet, namely, that into Right-hand and Left-hand factions. This appears to be but a modern invention, since it is not mentioned in any of the ancient books of the country. . . I do not believe that any idea of this baneful institution, as it exists at the present day, ever entered the heads of those wise lawgivers who consider that they had found in caste distinctions the best guarantee for the observance of the laws which they prescribed for the people.[250]

The earliest enumeration of the divisions was made by Pierre Sonnerat, an agent of the French government in Asia from 1774 to 1781.[251] Noting that 'sudras' were divided into right and left hand divisions, Sonnerat listed fourteen groups of the right and seven groups of the left. He also mentioned seven groups of 'sudras' who were totally separated from either division. These latter castes differ from those enumerated in other lists of the dual division in consisting of low status groups such as *iḍaiyar*s (herdsmen), *kusavar*s (potters), *muchchiyar*s and *chitragara*s (painters) as well as fishermen, long-distance porters, hunters and other forest folk.[252] Most others who have provided lists of the dual divisions affiliate these particular 'separated' groups with the right hand division and reserve the category of aloofness from or

[249] Appadurai notes that Brahmans were 'faction leaders' in the seventeenth century right-left strife in Madras city. These Brahmans were town merchants in competition with other merchant leaders and their factional strategies included making use of the divisional symbolism and recruitment presumably to counter the strategies of their opponents. Appadurai notes that Brahman faction leaders recruited support from any quarter, not from among established groupings. This supports Appadurai's interpretation of context variability of the right-left divisions in this colonial city where Brahmans were involved in mercantile activities and thus contextualized in the divisions as merchants. However, during the Chola period, we hear of no Brahman merchants, or artisans or others who might be included within the divisions (Appadurai, op. cit., pp. 250-3).

[250] *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, p. 24.

[251] *Voyage Aux Indes Orientales et La Chine*, v. 1, Paris, 1782, pp. 95ff. Consulted in the James Ford Bell Collection, University of Minnesota.

[252] Ibid., p. 61.

neutrality with respect to the divisions to high status groups, always Brahmans. The most exhaustive listing of groups of the dual divisions was compiled under the direction of Colin Mackenzie during his career as soldier, engineer, and surveyor-general of the Madras Presidency from 1786 to 1815. The work is entitled: *iḍaṅgai-valaṅgai jātiyār varalāṟu* (*History of the Left-Hand and Right-Hand Castes*).[253] Here, the canonical ninety-eight castes of the right-hand and the same number of left hand groups are spoken of, though less than this conventional number are actually listed. In addition, the flags and other symbols which each allegedly used are inventoried. The form of this Mackenzie document, like others of that collection, affects an archaic style. Thus, the right and left hand castes are enumerated in the Manu-like manner of caste generation through miscegenation. The listing of right and left hand groups by Gustav Oppert, an early student of Indian cultural history, was based upon a court record of the Chingleput *zillah* magistrate George Coleman, 25 July 1809. An Indian judical official, A. Krishnaswamy Iyer, prepared the list for Oppert, and the same list, with minor exclusions, was published by Maclean in the glossary volumes of his *Manual of Madras Administration*. The Maclean version of the divisions included sixty right hand groups and seven left hand groups together with their symbols.[254] A somewhat shorter list of the constituent groups of the divisions for the interior upland of Salem was prepared by the first British administrators of the tract called 'the Baramahal' (modern Salem district) in the 1790s. Forty right hand castes and eleven left hand castes are enumerated here, but an almost equal number, forty in all, are identified as 'neutral' (*madhyastam*) with respect to the dual divisions. Among the 'neutral' castes are Brahmans who appear to be excluded from all lists, but also many groups which appear as right hand groups in other lists.[255] The Srinivasachari list of Tamil castes of the right and left hand is based on a culling of inscriptional and early English records to elaborate the first list provided by M. Srinivasa Iyengar in 1914. Srinivasachari's dis-

[253] *'iḍaṅgai-valaṅgai jāṭiyār varalāṟu'*, Mackenzie Manuscript Collection, Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library, no. R. 1572.

[254] *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency in Illustration of the Records of Government and the Yearly Administrative Reports*, Government Press, Madras, 1893, v. 3, 'Glossary', pp. 1036-7.

[255] *The Baramahal Records; Section III*, 'Inhabitants', Madras, 1907, pp. v-vii.

cussion is the first by a modern historian.[256] For the southern portion of Karnataka, the lists of Francis Buchanan and Lewis Rice are important. Buchanan, reporting in 1800, restricted his observations to the town and neighbourhood of Seringapatam in modern Karnataka state where he was commissioned by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to report on the new territories acquired after the last Mysore war.[257] In the late nineteenth century Lewis Rice, the Director of Archaeological Researches of the state of Mysore, enumerated almost the same eighteen castes of the right hand and nine of the left hand among Kannada speakers on the basis of census returns. Rice's antiquarian interests led him to search for antecedents of the divisions in Karnataka as they existed in his day, but he had to acknowledge failure to find documentary evidence of an earlier time.[258] Evidence from among Telugu groups are in fact enumerated in the lists of Oppert, the Mackenzie document, and the Baramahal Records where they are usually distinguished by the terms *vaḍugu* ('northerner') or *telinga*. Only one discussion of dual divisions among Telugus exists, that of Subha Reddi in which nineteen right hand and seven left hand groups are enumerated as a result of this anthropologist's work with roving acrobats and other custodians of caste lore.[259]

Table VIII-7 presents only a portion of the confused evidence on the composition of groups of the dual divisions as they were known during the nineteenth century. From the hundreds of castes enumerated, only those with substantial numbers and those which appear on at least two lists have been noted. Many of the groups enumerated in the Mackenzie document cannot be identified with actual castes or tribes in the compendia of Thurston and Ananthakrishna Iyer.[260] Other groups are sub-divisions of castes found in these compendia and are not listed separately.

256 C.S. Srinivasachari, 'The Origin of the Right and Left Hand Caste Divisions', *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, v. 4 (1929), pp. 77-85.

257 *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, 3 vols., London, 1807. The decisions are referred to in v. 1, pp. 76-80.

258 B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore; A Gazetteer Compiled for Government*, rev. ed., 2 vols., London, 1897. The discussion is in v., 'Mysore in General', pp. 222-4.

259 N. Subha Reddi, 'Community-Conflict among the Depressed Castes of Andhra', *Man in India*, v. 30, no.4 (Oct.-Dec., 1950), pp. 1-12. He makes the interesting observation that while most Brahmans remain aloof from the dual divisions in Andhra some Vaishnava Brahmans associate with the division. This aberrant feature is also mentioned in the Mackenzie history of the dual divisions where Vai-

TABLE VIII-6

Valangai-Idangai Designations[a.]

Occupation / Caste Name	Source[b.] I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
AGRICULTURISTS								
Banajiga (Karavar)	R	R		R	R	R	R	
Malaiyaman	R						R	O
Nattaman Vellala	R	R					R	O
Palli	L	L		L			L	L
Vokkaliga			R	R		R		
Reddi	R				O		R	O
Vaduga Vellala	R	R						
Vellala	R	R						O
MERCHANTS								
Beri-chetti	L	L	L	L	L	L		L
Gujarati				R		R		
Jaina				R		R	L	O
Kamma	R	R			O			O
Komati	R	R/L	R	R		R	R/L	R
Lambadi	R				R	R	R	
Ladar				R		R	R	
HERDERS								
Golla				R	R	R/L	L	O
Kannidaiyar	R							R
Kuruba			R	R		R		O

kanasa Brahmans are listed among the right hand division (ibid., p. 5).

260 Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, 7 vols., Madras, 1909 and L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes*, 4 vols., Mysore, 1928-35.

a. Shown as usually spelled on at least two lists, these sixty-eight major castes are designated by the following symbols: 'R'='Right hand' or *valangai*; 'L'='left hand' or *idangai*; where castes are given as sometimes one or the other, 'R/L'; and when they are given as neutral, 'O'.

b. *Sources: I: Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency in Illustration of the Records of Government and the Yearly Administrative Reports*, 3v., Government Press, Madras, 1893, 3, 'Glossary', pp. 1036-7; *II*: Pierre Sonnerat, *Voyage Aux Indes Orientales et La Chine*, Paris, 1782, pp. 95ff, consulted in the James Ford Bell Collection, University of Minnesota Library; *III*: C.S. Srinivasachari, 'The Origin of the Right and Left Hand Caste Divisions', *J.A.H.R.S.*, 4 (1929), pp. 77-85; *IV*: B. Lewis Rice, *Mysore; A Gazetteer Compiled for Government*, 2 v., London, 1897, 1, pp. 222-4; *V*: N. Subha Reddi, 'Community-Conflict

Occupation Caste Name	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
WEAVERS								
Devanga				L		L	L	R
Kaikkolar	L	R	L		L		L	L
Pattunulkarar	R							O
Rangare				R		R		R
Padma Saliyar	R			R		R		
Pattu Sāliyar	R						R	R
Sedar	R	R						
Kannidiyan Seniyan	R						R	
Vadugan Seniyan	R						R	R
OILMEN								
Ganiga				R		R		
Hegganiga				L		L		
Ilai Vaniyar	R							O
Nagara Vaniyar	L	L		L				
Ontierutu Vaniyar	R							O
Sekku Vaniyar	R						R	
PAINTERS								
Chitrakara				R		R . .		
Muchchiyar	R	O	R					
ARTISANS								
Kammalar	L	L	L	L	L	L		L
Kanciyar	R			L				
Vaddi					R			R
Veli Tachchar	R						R	

Among the Depressed Castes of Andhra', *Man in India*, 30, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1950), pp. 1-12; *VI*: Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, 3v., London, 1807, 1, pp. 76-80; *VII*: *iḍaṅgai-valaṅgai jātiyār varalāru* in the Mackenzie Mss. of the Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library, University of Madras, no. R. 1572; *VIII*: Fort St. George, Government of Madras, *The Baramahal Records*, sec. 3, 'Inhabitants', Government Press, Madras, 1907, pp. v-vii.

Occupation Caste Name	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
BASKETMAKERS								
Kuravar	R	O						
Medara					R		R	
Vetakarar	R						L	
POTTERS								
Kumbara				R	R	R		
Kusavar	R	O	R				R	
MUSICIANS								
Dasigal	R	R						
Melakarar	R						R	
TODDY TAPPERS								
Sannar	R	L					R	R
FISHERMEN								
Besta			R	R		R		R
Karaiyan	R						L	
Pattanavar	R	O						
LABOURERS								
Ottiyar	R	O						
Uppara	R			R		R		
WASHERMEN								
Agasa	R	R	R				R	R
Vannar	R							R
BARBERS								
Ambattan	R	R/L	R				R	
Mangali	R				R			
Nayinda				R		R	R	
ACROBATS								
Dommara	R				R			
PRIESTS								
Mariamman Pujari	R	R						
Vaduga Pandaram	R							O
HUNTERS								
Enati	R				R			
Irular	R	O					R	
BEGGARS								
Kudukudupaigaral	R				R			

Occupation Caste Name	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
SCAVENGERS								
Holeya					R	R		
Pallar	L	L					L	
Paraiyar	R	R	R			R		R
LEATHERWORKERS								
Madiga			L	L	L	L		
Sakiligal	L	L					L	

The lists from which the above table was constructed raise obvious problems. One is that only rarely do all or most of the lists consider the same groups. Where this occurs, however, there is moderately strong agreement (i.e. more than half agree on the assignment of a division to particular groups), thus eight of the major caste groups of the macro region may be designated with confidence as of the right or the left division (Banajigas, Pallis, Beri Chettis, Komatis, Kaikkolars, Kammalars, Vannar, and Paraiyars). Moreover, the compositions by language regions, as those of Rice for Karnataka and Subha Reddi for Andhra, fail to register the variation which must have existed within such regions.[261] And, the sixty-eight caste groups comprise a small fraction of those in the region during the nineteenth century; the 1901 Census of Madras Presidency enumerates over 400 caste groups divided into twenty-one major classes.[262] In general, sources of the late nineteenth century neglect the division and thus are of no help on this matter.[263] One of the lists of the right and

[261] Buchanan noted this variability when comparing compositions of the divisions from Bangalore with those of Seringapatam, op. cit., p. 79; F.W. Ellis, in an 1812 report on the divisions cited above, stated: '. . . throughout the country, where these distinctions [of the right and left hand divisions] prevail, a general resemblance in the customs regarding the Right and Left Hand Castes [exists], yet this is liable to so many local variations, that there is scarcely a district or a town of note where there is not some difference to be found in these customs . . .', from *Madras, Public Department Consultations*, v. 391, p. 1450, dated 6 March 1812.

[262] *Census of India, 1901*, v. 15, *Madras*, pt 2, 'Index to Castes and Tribes', pp. 156-7.

[263] The *Mysore Gazetteer* of Rice is an exception, as are some of the *Manuals* and *Gazetteers* of the Madras Presidency published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of the latter, the following make some references to the dual divisions: C.S. Crole, *The Chingleput (Late Madras) District: A Manual*, Madras, 1879, pp. 33-4; F.A. Nicholson, *Manual of the Coimbatore District in the Madras*

left hand divisions used here is that of Chingleput compiled for an 1809 judgement by the magistrate George Coleman and used by Oppert, as already noted. This district, which included the city of Madras, contained a high immigrant population of Telugu and Kannada speakers, and it may distort our expectations of elaborateness for other places. Yet, the Coleman list is shorter than a list submitted about a year later for the same place to a special committee of inquiry appointed by the Government of Madras. The report of that committee in 1810 included petitions from right hand persons enumerating 130 constituent castes in their division, whereas, the Coleman list included only fifty-six *valangai* castes.[264]

As might be anticipated, the affiliation of some castes according to broad division is ambiguous. For example, Komati merchants are usually associated with the right hand division, but they are referred to as sometimes of the right and other times of the left hand division by Sonnerat.[265] Similar ambiguities are reported for Ambattan, barbers, by Sonnerat.[266] Kaikkolar weavers are returned a left hand group by some, but as a right hand group by Sonnerat.[267] The confusion in the Kaikkolar case is mentioned in early eighteenth century English record where it noted that the Kaikkolars were 'very fickle in their caste. . . sometimes of one (division), sometimes of another'.[268] Fiat was resorted to in 1812 when it was ordered that in the territory under the administration of the East India Company, Kaikkolars were to be regarded as belonging to the left hand division.[269] This was an act of authoritative adjudication reminiscent of the Vijayanagara period.

Presidency, Madras, 1887, pp. 61-3; J.H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual*, Madras, 1868, pt 2, pp. 4-7; F.J. Richards, *Salem Gazetteer*, Madras, 1918, pp. 125-6; and F.R. Hemingway, *Trichinopoly Gazetteer*, Madras, 1907, pp. 92-3. These are brief references lacking, for the most part, in any appreciation for or perception of the functions of the divisions. This is further substantiated by the virtual absence of any discussion of the divisions (one para. v. 7, p. 298) in Thurston, op. cit., though many castes are mentioned as affiliated with one or the other division.

264 *Madras, Public Department Consultations*, 6 March 1812, p. 1506. These lists are not included in the report.

265 Op. cit., p. 55.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Referred to in *Madras, Public Department Consultations*, 6 March 1812, p. 1416.

269 Ibid..

Sect affiliations played a part in the dual divisions of the eighteenth century and earlier. This was notably the case in Andhra where the divisions appear to have been late to develop.[270] Here the divisions, when they arose, did not use the designations 'right and left hand' but often used religious designations.[271] Similarly, Buchanan, in 1800, reported that in Karnataka artisans were divided between two sects of Siva worshippers. Panchan Banajigas were Lingayats and associated with the right hand along with Lingayat agriculturists while non-Lingayat, but Saivite Panchalars were leaders of the left hand division.[272]

Problems posed by the eighteenth century lists are best understood within the context of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In only one essential respect can they be supposed to reflect conditions of an earlier time. That is, the association of the right hand division was with agricultural activities and the left hand division with mercantile and craft interests. This distinction between the two divisions is suggested in the earliest records, but the distinction is made more salient during the later period with the growth of towns. Urban conditions throughout the Madras Presidency during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced stresses and corresponding solidarity requirements which were anticipated in the towns of the earlier Vijayanagara age. Teeming 'Black Town' behind Fort St. George in colonial Madras, where *idangai-valangai* outbreaks regularly disrupted life, may have had few earlier parallels in any earlier period in terms of densities, diversity of residential groups, and economic and social competition. However, the stress of progressive urbanization of South Indian society from the twelfth century on was manifested in the relationships between right and left caste groupings in many parts of the macro region, and especially in the continually improving terms of advantage to the mobile craftsmen and traders who were the core of *idangai* groups everywhere.

Urbanization as a factor in the evolution of the South Indian dual division of castes is given an importance in the present discus-

[270] K. Sundaram, *Studies in the Economic and Social Conditions of Medieval Andhra (A.D. 1000-1600)*, Triveni Publishers, Madras 1968, p. 89. He states that medieval Andhra was free of this division, though the functional characteristics of the divisions appear clear from his discussion.

[271] Subha Reddi, op. cit., p. 4.

[272] Buchanan, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 77-8.

sion which is not found in two recent and important studies of the right and left castes — that of Beck on Kongu and that of Appadurai on seventeenth century Madras. It has been argued here that the bifurcated groupings of middle and low castes into those of the right and those of the left was based upon the essential interests of broad occupational groupings which gave rise to alliance systems of a potential or occasional kind; that conflict between the two groupings was never the sole nor even a primary characteristic of the divisions (though conflict was often expressed in terms of right-left caste confrontations); and that the major activities of these potential groupings during the Chola period pertained to warfare and colonization and to the assimilation of various peoples to the expanding agrarian order. Temple urbanization of the later Chola period was important in changing the power terms under which mobile artisans and traders operated and therefore the bloc of local groupings with whom such mobile groups were, on occasion, allied.

Another way of conceiving the dual division in Chola times is to differentiate two broad groupings of local caste groups. First, there was the cluster of rural groups which focused upon the redistributional nexus of locality leaders — *nattar* or *mūvēnda-vēḷār* — who presided over *nadu* societies not simply as powerful groups of chiefs, but as ritually integrative *yajamānas*. These were the *valangai*, local, and therefore variable, social formations capable of being mobilized for a variety of purposes and cohering not simply through shared and interdependent agrarian functions, but also shared ritual affinities centred in the dominant locality leaders. Contrasted with such locality clusters were those groups whose livelihoods were not dependent upon fixed clienteles nor centred upon the redistributional authority of powerful local chieftains and clans, but rather oriented to an extensive consumer network — any and all who could pay for their specialized products. These included goods brought into localities through the itinerant trade network of the time, or goods produced by highly skilled craftsmen (e.g., goldsmiths, stone and metal sculptors). This second grouping — *idangai* — being tenuously connected to the prevailing and normative system of locality societies and, further, tainted by association with ancient, heterodoxical religious affiliations — Buddhist and Jaina — underwent a transformation of their standing beginning in the eleventh century in connection

with Chola-inspired temple construction, an activity widely imitated by locality leaders throughout the macro region. The demand from temples for the special craft skills and exotic ritual materials controlled by *idangai* groups enabled them to claim increasingly prestigious places in the society of later Chola times.

Temples of later Chola Hinduism became the prime moral centres of the age, and great temples caused the creation around them of towns. Over time, such urban places incorporated and centralized many functions previously dispersed over the countryside: political authority, trade, and perhaps most important, the earlier ritual primacy of the local, *yajamāna-nattar*. Whereas rural localities of *nattar* ritual primacy precluded *idangai* groups from any but the most marginal places, towns were places where artisans, craftsmen, and merchants along with those allied to them in left caste clusters could be important and, indeed, thrive.

During the Vijayanagara period, this process of urbanization continued, responsive still to religious factors, but also to the political and military centralization of the *nayaka*s and to the significant economic functions which urban places acquired as a result of the deliberate autarchic economic policies which led, among other things, to the destruction of the itinerant trade system by the enterprising *nayaka*s. To the importance of temple centres as the focus of ever-expanding pilgrimage networks and as the seats of the *acharya*s who commanded large sectarian followings was added the ever-present Vijayanagara kings. Their dharmic rule was most succinctly expressed in their protection and support of these sacred centres; Vijayanagara kingship cannot be separated from these purposes. Hence, it is not an accident of preservation that the historical record of Vijayanagara kingship should exist in temple inscriptions. It was here that the civil, as against the military, aspect of kingly rule was most clearly realized. Each temple city was like the capital city itself; it was a world, and, as it was the duty of kings (*rājadharma*) to protect and nourish the world, the inscriptional record of their custodianship is found at all such centres. It is as stated by A.M. Hocart:

> We have seen that king, priest, animal, tree, corpse, idol all represent things it is desired to control. So do the temples and palaces in which these cult-objects . . . are housed. So does the city in which stand the temples and palaces; it is sacred in the same sense as they are, that is they are equivalent to that on which the life of the people depends. Only the

> city never stands for anything specific; it is never less than the whole world, and its parts are the parts of the world. . . .[273]

Certain of the views of the dual division of Vijayanagara times presented here are sympathetic with and find support from recent work by Arjun Appadurai and Brenda Beck. But there are important differences from these recent works too. Beck and Appadurai have made important use of the dual division to explain specific aspects of South Indian society: Beck, the bifurcation of Tamil castes in the Kongu region and Appadurai, conflicts in seventeenth century Madras city. In the course of their work, each has developed a different set of explanations of the dual divisions in South India, and each has emphasized different attributes of the divisions. Thus, Beck sees the divisions as arising from two conditions: (1) a long-standing differentiation of 'immobile' castes whose claim to precedence was based upon landed wealth and control of people through control of land and in contrast to which there were 'mobile' castes whose wealth derived from crafts and trade; (2) an equally well-established ambiguity in models of esteem and precedence derived, on the one hand, from economic and political dominance with little concern about purity or ritual standing, and, on the other hand, from precisely such a concern as the basis of precedence (in the fashion of Kongu Brahmans who owned little land).

Beck then proposes that in Kongu and perhaps elsewhere in South India where conditions are similar, two structures of castes within a region come into existence. In one of these structures, fixed landed groups develop strong clan organization and elaborate clan and subcaste religious affiliations while in the other structure, taking as its model the high status, but land-poor Brahmans of Kongu, mobile wealth is used to achieve ritual purity through strict emphasis upon hierarchical social relations and exclusive devotion to universal Hindu deities. Here is a system of stable equilibrium expressed as an abstract and formal dualistic model in which a single Kongu society is divided into essentially non-conflicting, complementary halves.

Appadurai proposes a different conception.[274] He speaks of a

[273] *Kings and Councillors*, p. 250.

[274] Appadurai, 'Right and Left Hand Castes', p. 225-6, no.22 contains a trenchent critique of Beck's argument.

dual division as occurring within a single, unified, South Indian cultural system; however, for him the division is a conflict mechanism, a way of dealing with 'conflicts, anomalies, and antagonisms'[275] which derive from two different preconditions in South Indian caste: (1) the high degree of territorial segmentation of caste groups and especially the confined marriage networks of South India resulting from the conceptions of South Indians of the equal role of both parents in imparting qualities to their offspring; (2) the absence of *varna* categories called, or cognate with, Kshatriya and Vaishya. Ingeniously Appadurai offers the notion that the right and left divisions of the social body is a somatic metaphor like that of the horizontally divided body in the prototypic image of the *Purusha-sukta* of the *Rig Veda*, a metaphor which simultaneously can express a great variety of social conflicts while yet affirming the unity of South Indian society. The formulation of this conception Appadurai dates in the Chola period, and his analysis of the various traditions preserved about the divisions, lead him to conclude that the dual division formulation was invoked at times of weak political integration when regal adjudication was inadequate to the task of settling disputes among castes except when these profoundly threatened civil order.[276]

[275] Ibid., p. 221.

[276] Ibid., pp. 233-45 where these are summarized. According to Appadurai, 'the explicit formulation of the ['root paradigm'] scheme occurred under Chola auspices' (p. 223). From that time it appeared 'in varied contexts and served multiple functions'. These included assimilation of peoples new to caste-agrarian society of the Chola period, military activities, status strivings of artisans to a position of parity with Brahmans, and sectarian conflict between Jainas and Brahmans in medieval Karnataka. Appadurai's emphasis upon the heterogeneity of issues which invoked the dual division is certainly sound and provides a reminder of the hazard of attributing single causes or functions to so enduring and widespread a phenomenon as the dual social division of South Indian castes. But, even in the elicited heterogeneity of Appadurai's examples, most pertain to divisions between the broad occupational groupings upon which the conventional interpretation he is seeking to correct is based (e.g. the Brahman-Jaina conflict resolved in A.D. 1368, p. 226). He may wish to argue — but does not explicitly — that these persistent occupational alignments are incidental to the heterogeneous causes of conflict involving the two divisions in pre- and early Vijayanagara times, but the overall constancy of the recruitment and composition of the divisions throughout the macro region and over many centuries bids that the more conventional interpretation not be too hastily abandoned. This caution is reinforced by the fact that there is no explicit annunciation of the vertically divided body image during or after Chola times. This metaphor, it must be recognized, is one contrived by Appadurai as a

Both of these rich and original studies achieve theoretical clarity by appearing to convert perceived central tendencies into principles. For Beck, conflict assumes no serious place in the alignment of Kongu Tamil castes as formal, exhaustive, and complementary structures of the right and left castes; for Appadurai, it is conflict alone which created and sustained the divisions. In the present analysis, the complementarity of attributes of the divisions catalogued by Beck and the persistent occupational or materialistic basis for the major groups in both divisions is taken as very significant. However, the manner in which the divisions bridge highly localistic kinship territories and the explicit conflict motif of many of the *valangai* and *idangai* records, as argued by Appadurai, must be considered very important also. Both complementarity and conflict appear to characterize the divisions. Appadurai also attributes major importance to the fact of urbanization, an issue which Beck, concerned with the Kongu peasantry, says little about. Appadurai notes that the situation in seventeenth century colonial Madras — the case which he examines in detail — does not constitute a sharp break from urban situations of the Vijayanagara period in being especially volatile social stress points.[277] This assessment by Appadurai is the more impressive as it re-emphasizes the way in which the Vijayanagara period provided the basic forms — in rural land relations as well as relationships in towns — which constitute the foundations of modern society in South India during the later British period.

Appadurai's provocative discussion of the dual division does draw attention to a matter of great importance in relation to the present analysis of right and left castes during the Vijayanagara period. That is, he has, in his discussion of the dual divisions and in his discussion of the sectarian dualism among Srivaishnavas also discussed above, directed attention to the significant role of kings in the society of the time. This he concludes from a close study of Vijayanagara inscriptions and from his reading of a variety of the traditions ('indigenous explanations') about the dual divisions. The latter are succinctly summarized by him,[278] and he notes that all of these traditions relate to conflicts over emblems

means for moderns to understand the divisions; it is not a formulation of any South Indians of the past.

[277] Ibid., pp. 245-57.

[278] Ibid., pp. 233-42.

and practices claimed and disputed between groups which led to or may have threatened public order and thus prompted authoritative adjudication, usually by a king.

Considerable inscriptional evidence supports this point of royal intervention as well as Appadurai's attributed cause for conflict over largely symbolic objects: intensified urbanization with the concomitant stress entailed in that.[279]

In Tamil country, royal intervention into both temple and *valangai-idangai* affairs became continuous around the middle of the fifteenth century. According to Krishnaswami and other Vijayanagara scholars, this coincides with the major period of sustained intrusion of Vijayanagara authority into Tamil country. Even before, however, during the late fourteenth century, such intervention was noted in inscriptions with respect to the restoration of temple worship as has already been discussed. Not so well recognized is a similar appreciation of the dharmic intervention of Vijayanagara kings or their agents in matters pertaining to the relations of the right and left castes. The reconstructed Vishnu shrine at Dharapuram in Kongu country contains a record of the late fourteenth century which pays the following tribute to the dharmic kings of Vijayanagara:

> Affording protection to all and the enjoyment of freedom and prosperity to people of all sects — Srivaishnavas of the eighteen lands, Sri Maheswaras, to the right and left communities — may they so govern the country foreover. To them this dharmam is dedicated by all Srivaishnavas.[280]

The late period of the reign of Devarya II (A.D. 1422-46) provides good documentation of such dharmic intervention. Then, according to a record from Takkolam (in modern Arkonam taluk of North Arcot) the Vijayanagara king issued an edict which was circulated to the major Siva and Vishnu temple centres of Tondaimandalam, including Tiruvorriyur, Kanchipuram, Kalahasti, and Tiruvalangadu, providing for the remission of certain dues from temple lands and their use by the temples.[281] Devaraya's successor, Virapratapa, who reigned for about a year (A.D. 1446-7),[282] re-established the rates of dues to be paid by right and left castes to a

[279] Ibid., pp. 227-8.
[280] Viraraghavacharya, 'The Srivilliputtur Temple', p 6, no.8, p. 1.
[281] *A.R.E.*, 1922, para. 45, p. 110 regarding 270/1921.
[282] Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 300.

level which had existed at an earlier time before these dues had been increased and coercively collected, thus compelling the flight of many in the dual divisions.[283] This occurred at villages around the town of Tirukkoyilur and elsewhere in modern South Arcot.[284] Another record of Devaraya's reign comes from another temple centre, Vriddhachalam, in South Arcot, which recounts a royal order including the following passage:

> members of the *Valaṅgai* and *Iḍaṅgai* sects met . . . and came to the decision that, since the officers of the king (*rajanyas*) and owners of *Jīvitas* [tax-free prebends][285] oppressed. . . and the *kāṇiyāḷan* [holders of hereditary land rights] and the Brahmanas took the *rājakaram* (i.e., taxes), none of *Valaṅgai* and *Iḍaṅgai* people should give them shelter and that (none of the people of the two sects) born in the country should write accounts for them or agree to their proposals. If any proved a traitor to the country (by acting against this settlement), he should be stabbed. . . .[286]

In discussing this Vriddhachalam inscription, the epigraphist noted that similar records of Devaraya II are to be found in Tanjavur and Tiruchirapalli.[287]

Such cooperation between the divisions may have been less common than competition. Many Vijayanagara inscriptions refer to the equalization of the rights of each division with the other. from the Arunachalesvara temple at Tiruvannamalai, dated Saka 1340, contained an order of Devaraya I, possibly issued by his son, to the effect that the *idangai* and *valangai* groups at Tiruvannamalai should enjoy the same privileges.[288] The same notion is conveyed in a record of Achyutadevaraya which speaks of the ninety-eight casts comprising both the right and left divisions.[289] This adjudicated parity of privileges may reflect pressure of *idangai* demands arising out of their steadily augmented urban power. Such a sense is conveyed in several records of the later Vijayanagar period pertaining to special demands of *idangai* groups. One from Madurai reports the action of Virappa

[283] *A.R.E.*, 1922, para. 46, pp. 110-11 regarding 476/1921.

[284] *A.R.E.*, 1907, para. 55, p. 69, and *A.R.E.*, 1904-5, para. 30 regarding a record at Kilur, Tirukkoyilur taluk, South Arcot.

[285] *S.I.T.I.*, 'Glossary', p. xx.

[286] *A.R.E.*, 1918, para. 68, p. 163.

[287] Ibid., regarding 92/1918, dated *śaka* 1357.

[288] *A.R.E.*, 1903 regarding 564/1902 and *I.M.P.*, v. 1, p. 94.

[289] *A.R.E.*, 1906 regarding 103/1906, from Jambai, South Arcot.

Nayaka in confirming the fivefold division of Kammalars of the left division at the request of the latter.[290] In another inscription from Tiruvadi in Cholamandalam, Chinnappa Nayaka exempted the five classes of Kammalars from certain taxes which had previously been exacted under threat of force and had caused many of the *idangai* artisans to flee the town.[291] Still another inscription from Tiruvamattur in modern Villupuram, South Arcot, refers to a resolution by residents of the place before Krishnappa Nayaka, agent of the Vijayanagara king Sriranga, establishing for the Kammalars of the vicinity the same rights and privileges as those enjoyed by artisans of the *idangai* in the towns of Padaividu, Senji, Tiruvannamalai, and Kanchi.[292]

This evidence of *idangai* demands for political intervention to achieve parity of privileges with their fellows in other places and with right caste groups must occasionally have resulted from or led to conflict as may be judged from an epigraph of the late fourteenth century referring to conflict between right and left castes in Tondaimandalam which endured for four years.[293] Tondaimandalam also exhibited another form of stress which appears to have occasioned royal intervention during the latter Vijayanagara period. This was competition between Tamil-speaking Vellalas and Telugu-speaking Balijas for locality headships. The perceptive Francis W. Ellis, in his 1818 discussion of *mirasi* rights, reported that when Tondaimandalam came under the control of the Bijapur sultanate, probably around A.D. 1650, following the ejection by the Muslims of Sriranga III, the office of *nāṭṭān* customarily held by Tamil Vellalas was reduced in importance by the creation of a parallel local office called *dēśāyi* filled by Telugus. *Nāṭṭān*s of Tondaimandalam had previously regulated all disputes pertaining to caste and were especially important in *valangai* affairs in the seventy-nine *nadu*s of Tondaimandalam. *Dēśāyi*s, appointed from among Telugu Balijas, claimed joint jurisdiction with the Tamil *nāṭṭān*s in an office which came to be called *nāḍu-d'śam*. *Idangai* groups, Ellis reported, disputed the authority of both.[294]

[290] *A.R.E.*, 1918, regarding 55/1917.

[291] *A.R.E.*, 1922, regarding 413/1921.

[292] Ibid., 65/1922.

[293] *A.R.E.*, 1906, regarding 422/1905 dated *saka* 1305 from Gudimallur, North Arcot.

[294] *Replies to Seventeen Questions Proposed by the Government of Fort St. George*

While the frequency of royal intervention into local, Tamil affairs, including conflicts of the right and left castes, certainly increased during the fifteenth century, the few inscriptions pertaining to these matters continue to reflect the potential nature of the divisions and the ability of these groupings to cooperate against exploitation at the hands of others: Brahmans, royal officials, soldiers, and others.[295] This the assembled right and left caste groupings did just as they had done during the Chola period when there were few signs of royal adjudication.

Relative to Mirasi Right, Government Gazette Office, Madras, 1818, App. 1, 'List of the Nadus, Kottams and Villages of Tondamandalam', p. ix, note.

[295] See the undated, probably post-Chola record from Pennadam on the Vellar River boundary of Cholamandalam, *A.R.E.*, 1928-9, para. 79, p. 90; also a late Chola record, possibly Kulottunga III from Aduturai, Tiruchirapalli, *A.R.E.*, 1913, regarding 34 of 1913.

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